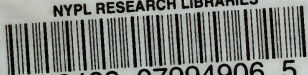
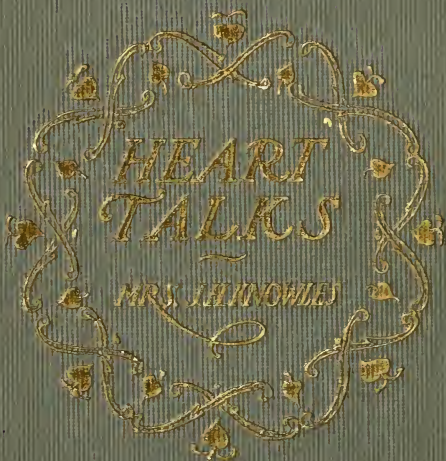


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To Mrs. McKenna  
with loving regards.

From  
Ellin J. Knowles

Easter,  
April 16.  
1911

Knowles  
21





# Heart Talks



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Christ on the way to Emmaus

# Heart Talks *On* Bible Themes

By

MRS. J. H. KNOWLES

*Author of "Spirit and Life," "Christmas  
Chimes," etc.*

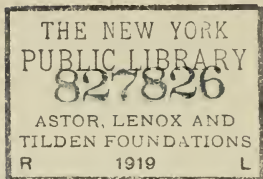
Did not our heart burn within us  
while He talked with us by the way?

—*Luke xxiv. 32.*



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New York: 158 Fifth Avenue  
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*To friends, with whom for many  
years in many Bible Classes  
I have had sweet fellowship,  
this little book is inscribed*





## Foreword

THESE Heart Talks are selections from those originally written by me for *The Sunday-School Journal and Bible Magazine*. They are reprinted here, with some changes, by permission of the publishers of that periodical. "Heart Talks" are simply what the name implies. They are not studies or expositions. No order of dates is given. The book need not be read consecutively. The Scripture references are designed to turn "the eyes of the heart" to further reading of the Word. I earnestly hope that the references will be most carefully read, and that they will bring their own message to each heart.

(MRS. J. H.) ELLIN J. KNOWLES.

*New York.*



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I

Old Testament





# Heart Talks

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## THE WONDERFUL BOOK

*Nehemiah viii. 1-8 ; 2 Kings xxii. 8-20 ; xxiii. 1-3.*

NEVER was there another book like it. In the days of Nehemiah, five hundred years before Christ, it was the same spring of joy and comfort for the people who were attentive to hear it as it is to-day. Perhaps Ezra read to them the eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, the very one we love to read because it tells us the Lord leads us all through life, and that sorrows and trials are meant to prove us and to make us know that there is something much better for us than having our own way. The sweet words came as a message from heaven as Ezra gave the sense and caused them to understand. "Thou shalt remember all the way that the Lord thy God hath led thee." All the way? In the captivity? In the persecutions? In the loss of home, and nation, and temple? Yes; even through those grievous things which seemed so utterly against his will God had led them for a purpose. There was light on those dreary years of exile when they heard, "As a

man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee ;” and light upon the future in the promise, “The Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills.” Something very good was yet to come to them, the chosen people of God, if only they would “obey His voice indeed.”

Whether it was this or some other part that Ezra read, their hearts were broken under the strange, sweet power of the book. They went their way to be glad, because they had understood the words that were declared unto them. It is so now when we are attentive to hear it. Would you neglect, or destroy, or disbelieve the only revelation from God which throws light upon the sorrows and mysteries of life and promises a future of blessedness? “I am the Light,” Jesus said, and for all who believe Him death is only a passing shadow and the life beyond beautiful and attractive. What is it in this book which gives it universal power over human hearts to comfort, strengthen, and encourage so that we see the path of life more clearly and walk in it more bravely and steadily? There is but one answer. It is the word of God that lives and abides forever. Worry and sorrow would have left the race hopeless ages ago if there had been “no light but reason,” no book except those written by the

wisest philosophers. No other book ever said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." No other ever said, "Let not your heart be troubled; . . . in My Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you." No other book has been translated into almost every language upon earth, and made a transformation in the character of those to whom it is given. It has penetrated into Thibet, having been translated into that tongue by a Moravian minister years before the missionaries were allowed to enter that fast-barred door. The entrance of the word that "giveth light" into every land the world over is a testimony that it is God's word, and He wills that it shall find its way to every creature.

When one of the earliest missionaries went to India he carried with him a library of Greek and Latin authors. The vessel was wrecked and everything lost. The crew and passengers, thankful to save their lives, were gathered round a fire kindled on the shore when a sailor came running up the beach crying, "See what I have found," and handed the missionary his Bible, the only thing that had escaped the sea, and he afterwards wrote, "My classics went to the bottom, but when the Bible was brought back to me I seemed to hear a voice from heaven saying, 'Greek and Latin are not needed to convert

the natives of India; the Bible alone, with God's Spirit, is sufficient, for it is the sword of the Spirit and mighty through God to the pulling down of Satan's strongholds.'” And so it has proved, not alone in India, but in every non-Christian country in the last half century. Won't you try what this blessed book will do for you when you are attentive to hear it?

Josiah had been living up to his light before the book of the law was discovered during the cleansing of the temple, but new light shone upon his mind from the Word of God. He was astonished and distressed to find that in his sincere efforts to reform the nation he had tolerated so much that was not pleasing to God.

There are many undiscovered Bibles now. There may be one in your own home. It lies in plain sight on your table, but it is as undiscovered really by you as was this book hidden under the rubbish. You are a Christian: you wish to please God; but if that wonderful Book should be brought out from under the rubbish of other things you read and the many interests that take all your thought, what revelations it would make! You would be surprised to find how far below the standard are your ideals and your practice. Jesus said to some persons who had very unenlightened ideas on a practical

matter, "You err in your hearts, not knowing the Scriptures." David said, "Thy word have I hid in my heart, that I may not sin against Thee." Bible teachings have so permeated the world's thought that everybody gets the benefit of it, even though they personally neglect it. The entrance of the Word gives light, and we live in that light as we live in the sunshine without realizing what fearful results would follow if only for a few hours the sun should be taken away.

It is a living Book. It brings life and light to the heart and mind, because it is God's message to men. He says it shall not return to Him without results. It shall accomplish the thing for which He sends it. It shall be like the rain and the snow making the earth bud and blossom, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater. All this is proved true wherever the Word has gone over all the world. It will be proved true for your own self if only you "discover" your own Bible by reading, loving, knowing it, in the light and with the help of the Holy Spirit.

## IN THE BEGINNING—GOD

*Genesis i. ; John i. 1-10.*

GOD has left many wonderful things in His universe for man to search out. The Bible does not undertake to reveal them. But since man by searching cannot find out God, He tells the story of Himself in this inspired book. To know how stars are made; how the earth is held in its orbit round the sun; how rocks are formed; how the mountains were brought forth; how every living thing found breath—what a delight to know all this! and man by searching is knowing more every year. But to *know God*, who made all these things, is life eternal. We can wait for “the slow unfolding of ages” to know His works, but God Himself we must know now. So do not look for accurate scientific statements of creation in Genesis, nor discredit the book if you do not find them. Take it for what it is given—the revelation of God to man, and the unfolding of His plan of redemption and salvation through Jesus Christ. Other knowledge shall vanish; but that which we get of Jesus, Creator and Saviour, through the spiritual study of the word from Genesis to Revelation, enters into the foundations of life which abides forever.



“In the beginning God.” Far, far behind and before all things is God. “From everlasting to everlasting Thou art God.” “Things were not grown of themselves, but have been called into being by a presiding Intelligence and an originating Will, a living, conscious Spirit who fashions all things.” What a rest for the mind in its quest through the mysteries to stop with God! It is vain for the mortal to try to pierce the veil of the eternal. “The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou Me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner-stone thereof; when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?” Job could not answer, nor can we, except to say, “In the beginning—God.” Turning to St. John’s Gospel, we read that the Lord Jesus was in the beginning with God, and without Him was not anything made that is made. Hebrews i. 10–12 says that in the beginning He laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of His hands.

Colossians i. 14-17 says all things were created by Him and for Him; He is before all things, and by Him all things consist; and in the Revelation we see the saints casting their crowns before Him saying, "Thou art worthy to receive glory, honor, and power; for Thou hast created all things, and for Thy pleasure they are and were created." The corner-stone of our faith is here in the first word of the revelation of God to man. Jesus, the Saviour of the world, is God, the Creator of all things.

The new creation in Christ Jesus is symbolized in this story of the material creation. The earth without form, void; darkness over all—is not that like a Christless soul? The Spirit of God moves upon it in conviction of sin; in revealing the light; in quickening its powers into life and fruitfulness. "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." Made in His image at first, we are "created anew in Christ Jesus" once more to be like Him.



## PARADISE LOST

*Genesis iii.*

Two great facts which determine the present condition and future destiny of every nation and every individual on earth are set forth in simple statement in this third chapter of Genesis. The story should be read in simplicity of heart. To search out its mysteries—for mysteries there are which God has not chosen to reveal—is not profitable. The most learned scholar cannot tell, beyond what God has told, just how or why came sin; nor just how and why came redemption from its curse and power.

The story is here, as much as we can know until we have the fuller knowledge and clearer sight of heaven. It is retold in Romans v. 12, 18, 19: "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. . . . Even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous."

Can we complain of God, that all men suffer in the sin of the first of our race, when all men equally share in the redemption through Christ

Jesus? Do not limit the atonement of Jesus. Study that fifth chapter of Romans. The whole Bible teaches not that man is the helpless victim forever of inherited sin, but that the sin of the race has been atoned for and all its consequences met in the world's Redeemer, and the responsibility comes back where it began, to the individual sinner.

" He comes to make His blessings known  
Far as the curse is found."

Not a poor savage of the South Seas; not a dweller in Greenland, Asia, Africa; not a convict in any prison; not a child in any home, but shares in this full, world-wide redemption.

Let us look at the thing which curses humanity. It is the same to-day in every characteristic as it was in Eden. There stands Eve, our representative; God's child, beloved by Him, created with high possibilities for a glorious destiny. The tempter, who covets everything good, seeks to get her away from God. She looks, listens, questions, yields, and is lost, except that God would not give her up, nor will He give up any soul until it forces Him to do so. Eve was not responsible for Satan's coming to tempt her; trial of circumstances she had nothing to do with; she is responsible solely for her own part in believing and obeying the tempter rather than God.

The first step in sin is to question God's word. "Yea, hath He said?" The second is to become interested in it rather than to fly from it. The third is to disobey. To go contrary to God's command is sure disaster. The fourth step is a sense of shame and loss; something gone from our own best self. The fifth is alienation from God and misunderstanding of Him, with all the sorrowful results.

The steps to salvation are: First, the loving God, coming to seek the child that was hiding from Him. Second, His provision to atone for sin and heal the wound that is made in the soul. "Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree." Third, the acceptance by simple faith of His way of salvation. "Being justified freely by His grace, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to declare His righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God, that He might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Disobedience shut the gates of paradise; obedience opens them. Do not say God shuts you out. God put a flaming sword to guard the way to the tree of life so that you might find it if you will. "I am the life," says Jesus. "Out of His mouth there went a flaming sword," says the Revelator. The sword is His

word. Believe, obey, and you have right to the tree of life, and that is the very centre and heart of paradise.

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## RAIN AND RAINBOW

*Genesis xi. 8-17.*

THE history of the world's sin is the history of its sorrow. God does not make trouble; it is the consequence of sin. Because it has brought so much pain upon His creatures God's attitude towards it is that of grief and stern retribution. Its tendency, as we see in the condition of the world before the flood, is to grow worse and worse, and to force the withdrawal of His Holy Spirit from the human heart. Sin is something to be feared. Jesus said: "Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear Him, which after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear Him." These are solemn words spoken by one who understands the awful results of sin.

In the midst of a very sinful world it is possible to live a pure and righteous life. Here was Noah, who kept his conscience and his

faith with God when he stood quite alone. Four remarkable things are said of him: he found grace in the eyes of the Lord; he was a just man and walked with God; he did according to all that the Lord commanded him; he was heir of the righteousness which is by faith. Any soul of whom this may be said can live in the midst of the most adverse surroundings, pure and true, like a lily blooming on the breast of a slimy pond, surrounded by all rank and poisonous growth.

The salvation of Noah in the ark is a type of salvation in Jesus Christ. It was God's plan and there was no other way. It was God's personal command, "Come *thou* into the ark," and it was Noah's faith in the plan of God, and his obedience to the command, which saved him in the midst of universal destruction. Nothing could have appeared more unreasonable than the building of this ark. How natural to say, "Where is the necessity? There never has been a flood, there probably never will be one. How can it answer the purpose if the necessity should arise? How my neighbors and friends will laugh at such an undertaking!" So unbelief would reason and does reason now against the simple way of salvation through faith in Jesus. "To the Jews a stumbling-block, to the Greeks foolishness, but unto them that are called, both Jews

and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

“I do set My bow in the cloud.” Over the world’s sin and sorrow stretches the arch of God’s love. The wages of sin is death; every living thing died; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. The rainbow encircles the throne. Look up! Over every storm of sin or pain is God’s covenant token. He sets His bow in every cloud. You may call the poorest little child from the barest tenement house when the beautiful arch spans the sky, and say, “It is for you, little one.” You may turn the weary eyes of the sufferer towards the window, and say, “It is yours, dear friend.” You may say to one whose sight is gone, “The bow is there, though you cannot see it, and it is your token of God’s covenant love, ordered in all things and sure.” Let the unbelieving, unloving world see in the rainbow only the result of natural laws; but let us who believe God see it always as His token of covenant care, and let us thank Him for the love which gave a Saviour to the world, and promises to us all precious things in Him.



## A NEW START

*Genesis xii. 1-9.*

I DO not know how God spoke to Abram, whether by an audible voice, or a secret impression upon his mind, or a combination of circumstances which made it clear to him he had better leave Haran and take a new start in a new country. But whatever way it came, Abram recognized the voice of God and promptly obeyed—wise man that he was. And this is the lesson I pray may be written in our hearts: that God's hand is over your life and mine as truly as over Abram's, and He calls us to go in ways not of our own choosing, and the only path of safety and success is to seek His guidance and follow His bidding.

This was a radical change in a hitherto quiet life. Abram was told to get out of his country, from his kindred, from his father's house, into a land of which he knew nothing but was to trust God to show him. This required faith and courage, two grand qualities of character worth more to a man or woman than all the ease and comfort of old home associations. The sharp changes which jostle us out of the place we find so comfortable are not the worst that can befall us. Frequent transplanting is

necessary to the development of certain plants. God cannot make much of some people because they have not the faith and courage to start out in new surroundings and wider opportunities.

God's call to a new life comes to us in many ways. It comes in inward conviction; through His word, His Holy Spirit, and in His providences. He is always calling us to something better than we already have. James Martineau says, "High hearts are never long without hearing some new call, some distant clarion of God even in their dreams, and soon they are observed to break up the camp of ease and start on some fresh march of faithful service." In the secret life, the real life of your soul, have you not heard His call to you to leave old associations, old habits, old hindrances, and come out into a new, full, blessed life of freedom and service?

It means something to take a stand for God in the midst of all that opposes Him. But faith that never made a sacrifice is not worth much. "Even a journey may be the outcome of an inspiration," as was this journey of Abram's. Every day, in all our goings, we may have the divine direction. "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord." To be trustful, attentive, obedient, is the secret of happy, successful living.



“ I cannot always see the way that leads  
    To heights above,  
I sometimes quite forget He leads me on  
    With hand of love ;  
And yet I know the path must lead me to  
    Immanuel’s land,  
And when I reach life’s summit I shall know  
    And understand.”

---

## DELIVERANCE

*Exodus i. 1-14 ; iii. 7-10.*

THE Book of Exodus is the story of redemption ; the age-long, world-wide story of bondage to wrong, and possible freedom through the power of God. The dried mummy of the Egyptian oppressor in the British Museum is a grim comment on the pride which lifts itself against God. “Come on, let us deal wisely with them and put them away from the earth,” said the jealous, haughty king. “I have seen the affliction of My people, and I am come to deliver them,” said the Lord. And so, while Pharaoh did his utmost to destroy, the secret working of God’s purpose brought forth more abundant life. “The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew.”

The spirit of Pharaoh is the same in all who resist, whether through ignorance or self-will, the plan and purpose of God. He “knew not

Joseph"; he knew not what a benefactor he had been to Pharaoh's own people, nor that the bringing of the Hebrews into Egypt was a part of the plan of a mighty One whose purpose no man could thwart. His mistakes were the mistakes of ignorance, but their consequences were none the less disastrous. Ignorance may excuse wrong-doing, but it will not avert the evil that comes from it. I did not know I was touching poison ivy, but the effects were as painful as if I had known. So let us learn from this old Egyptian schemer that it is not safe to be ignorant of God's ways, God's purposes, God's promises, God's word; and, while we have every means of knowing, it is our duty to give the light to others who have not had our opportunities.

How vain it is to fight against God, for two reasons: "He ruleth by His power forever; let not the rebellious exalt themselves." This alone would show the folly of resisting His will. But when we know His will is good; that His rulings are always rulings of love; that He seeks for all His creatures their highest blessing, it does indeed appear supreme folly to lift oneself up against supreme good. And yet how often we have Pharaoh's spirit without the excuse of his ignorance. He thought he had devised a very wise plan to get rid of the people of whom God would make a great nation. He made the

greatest mistake any one can make in any plan or expectation—he left God out of his calculations. He put hard burdens upon the Israelites; he destroyed their little ones; he afflicted them until he hoped their despair would crush them out; but somehow his plans worked just the opposite of what he intended. “The people multiplied and waxed very mighty.” It is always so, and always will be: success with God, failure without Him.

It will be so in the great conflict with evil in the world. Satan oppresses humanity with all the jealousy of Pharaoh. He seeks to destroy every soul in which there are possibilities of resistance against his kingdom. He plans “wisely” to carry out his purposes of evil, and it looks as if he were succeeding marvellously well. The bondage is heavy; suffering and death are universal; we sigh by reason of the sin and sorrow. But as there was in Egypt a secret power stronger than Pharaoh, so there is now. Let us never give to the evil one the honor that belongs to God. Let us never for a moment think the schemes of Satan will succeed and the purpose of God come to naught.

I smile when I read the frustrating of Pharaoh’s “wisdom,” and remember that it is written that just so all the counsel of wickedness will some day be overthrown. “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take

counsel together, against the Lord, and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh; the Lord shall have them in derision." Satan, like Pharaoh, does his utmost to destroy, but Jesus has come that we may have more abundant life, and where sin has abounded grace shall much more abound. God hears the groaning of every soul in bondage. He says, "I know their sorrows." He also says, "I am come to deliver."

---

## GOD IN HUMAN AFFAIRS

*Exodus ii ; Acts vii. 17-30 ; Heb. xi. 23-29.*

THIS beautiful story in Exodus speaks to the heart. It shows the significance of common, every-day occurrences, and how God uses men and women and little children to work out His great purposes in human affairs. We shall see hereafter as we cannot see now, how what we have called "happenings" in our life have been God's appointments to bring to pass what a Father's care has planned for us. Jochebed, the Princess, Miriam and the baby, entered into the divine plan for the fulfillment of great purposes. Who can measure the influence of mother love upon the destinies of men? Here

was the redemption of a nation held in the heart of Jochebed. Even the beauty of the child had to do with it. She could not bear to see that fair face and those goodly limbs sacrificed to the cruel will of Pharaoh. Of course she would have loved him if he had been the homeliest little creature ever born, but he was so "exceeding fair" that she felt within her the prophecy of his future. She had not only a mother's intuition, but she was a devout woman, and had those secret monitions which such souls get from God. "By faith she hid him three months, because she saw he was a proper child."

Jochebed is a very interesting woman. As I think of her I am sure it would have been a pleasure to know her—such a loving woman, so courageous, so full of faith, so resourceful, and so unconscious of the large place she was filling in the world's destiny. The most influential and useful people are very often of little consequence in their own eyes.

Deftly weaving the little boat of bulrushes, and daubing it with slime and pitch—doing the easy, pretty work and the disagreeable with equal interest because it was for the welfare of her child—she laid him in it with perfect confidence that God would take care of him. But she was no fanatic. She used every means good sense and sound judgment could suggest to

keep her baby safe. She believed, as all sensible people do, that God works by human means whenever such means are available. Miriam was set to watch, and if any danger had threatened the ark she would have given alarm.

The Princess came down to bathe in the river. There was nothing unusual in that. It was her custom. Yet it was a part of God's plan for the deliverance of His people. Even her curiosity served His purpose. "What is that queer little boat among the flags? Go, bring it to me," she said to one of her maidens. Can you not see that group of Egyptian girls crowding round the curious ark, talking, laughing, wondering, exclaiming? Very naturally the baby cried, and the Princess was sorry for him. I am sure she said, "This is one of the Hebrews' children; dear, sweet, beautiful boy! I shall take care of him and have him for my own." She appears not to have been afraid of her cruel old father. Even Pharaoh probably had a good side and was fond of his daughter. I think there are very few people who are so wholly bad that God gives them up entirely as impossible to save.

Wise little Miriam! I wonder if that was her own bright thought, or if she had been told to get the mother for the baby's nurse? It was a most natural thing to do, and yet that too was a part of God's great plan. The Prin-



cess said, "Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages." Little she knew what she did that day when she followed her fancy for a beautiful child rescued from the river. Not for her, but for God and for His people, was Moses nursed ; not the gold lavished, but the opportunity to train her boy in the faith of his fathers, was the mother's reward ; not the treasures of Egypt, but the greater riches of God's approval was the inheritance of him she called her son.

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor My ways your ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts." This was true in these incidents we have read ; it is no less true in the incidents of your life and mine.

---

## PI-HAHIROTH

*Exodus xiv.*

STANDING by the Red Sea with this fearing, hesitating company, how closely they touch our own experience ! We are journeying towards the heavenly Canaan, brought out of the house of bondage, as Israel out of Egypt, by the hand of our Deliverer. Of them it is said, "The Lord went before them by day in a pillar of a

cloud, to lead them the way ; and by night in a pillar of fire, to give them light ; to go by day and night." Of us it is said : " He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them." His leading is often mysterious, but the great thing for us is to believe that He leads even in the ways that perplex us. " Speak unto the children of Israel, that they turn and encamp before Pi-hahiroth." How surprising ! how inexplicable ! Why should they be turned out of their way to be entangled and shut in between the mountains and the sea ? There were easier, more direct ways towards Canaan ; why did God command them to go by way of Pi-hahiroth ? It was a defile in the mountains, a narrow pass ; no way to turn on either side ; mountains here, mountains there, the Red Sea in front ; and the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them. It did seem there was a mistake somewhere. Moses ought to have left them alone in Egypt ; service there, hard as it was, would be better than to die in the wilderness ; surely God was not leading ; Moses was altogether to blame for their difficulties. How natural it sounds ! Just so we do when we—yes, even we who are marching towards Canaan—get into straits where we do not see the way out. Could they not remember



the great things God had done for them? Did they not see the pillar of cloud and fire? How could they be so overcome with distrust and fear? And what of us? Can we not remember how God has brought us out of former trials? Are not His promises of guidance and deliverance our pillar of cloud and flame? Oh, thou of little faith, wherefore dost thou doubt?

Pi-hahiroth was certainly a place of difficulty; it was not an imaginary trial, it was real; but it was directly in the course of God's leading. He had a purpose in it. He knew how to deliver from it. If only the people had believed and trusted, what a happy time they might have had even in Pi-hahiroth! I know men and women who are there to-day and are singing songs of deliverance with the Red Sea before them and Pharaoh's host behind, because *they know whom they have believed*. What seems hopeless entanglement to us is plain to God. He knows the way out.

“This thing on which thy heart is set, this thing that cannot be,  
 This weary, disappointing day that dawns, my friend, for thee,  
 Be comforted; God knoweth best, the God whose name is love,  
 Whose tender care is evermore our passing lives above;  
 So take each disappointment, friend, 'tis at the Lord's command;  
 Shall God's appointment seem less good than what thyself had planned?”

Pharaoh would not willingly relinquish his hold upon these people. He pursued them. So Satan pursues the soul that has been delivered from the bondage of sin ; and the mysterious providences of God sometimes seem to put us directly in his power. But listen : "There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man : but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able ; but will with the temptation also make a way of escape, that ye may be able to bear it." If there is no way He will make one. The Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptation. Gloriously He delivered His people when to human sight their case was hopeless. He does no less now. One look from the Lord in the morning watch from the pillar of cloud and fire so troubled their foes that they said, "Let us flee from the face of Israel ; for the Lord fighteth for them against the Egyptians." Glorious fact in present experience ; glorious prophecy of final everlasting triumph over sin and wrong and pain !

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## DISCOURAGED BECAUSE OF THE WAY

*Numbers xxi. 1-9.*

"MUCH discouraged because of the way." Many sympathizers have these wilderness pil-

grims! "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man." It was hard to be turned back to a long desert march when it seemed as if they might have taken a short cut through Edom to Canaan. Many had died on the weary journey; some had just been taken prisoners by the Canaanitish king; of Miriam, whose songs of triumph had cheered them, they could now only say, "In Kadesh she died, and was buried;" Aaron had gone up on Mount Hor and never returned. There were mysteries, disappointments, hardships, ever increasing as they journeyed on. Canaan seemed farther off than ever, and this new turn, directly away from it rather than towards it. Even heaven-sent food had lost its sweetness. How familiar it is! It is human heart history. Let us get its lesson.

Discouragement—its cause, its effects, its cure. Discouragement is fatal to success both in temporal and spiritual concerns. The best you can do for yourself or another is to lift up the hands that hang down and make the hopeless take heart again. Life is a lost battle for the discouraged soul.

The cause of discouragement is really not the hardships of the way, else every one would be discouraged, because every one has hardships of one kind or another. It is looking at the hardships, thinking of them, letting them get the better of us, instead of looking at the mercies,

remembering what God has done for us, what He has promised to do, and believing that He is able and willing to keep His promise through the wilderness journey and in the heavenly country whither we are going. In one word, the cause of the world's unrest, and of each heart's discouragement, is unbelief. Its effects are discontent, wrong views of God and His government, rebellion, questioning the profit of serving Him, loss of spiritual strength, and of comfort in spiritual things. Why did we come out of Egypt? There is no bread or water here; our soul loatheth this light bread. Life is hard; God does not care; God does not deliver; a good life here and heaven hereafter are not worth the cost. Then the fiery serpents of sin get hold. The sting is fatal; all is lost unless we find a remedy. Thank God, His love provides it. "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life."

The cause is unbelief; the effect is sin; the remedy, faith. The bitten Israelite looked at the brazen serpent and lived; the despairing world, the discouraged soul, looks to Jesus and finds comfort, hope, salvation. "With Him—all things." Hope, comfort, joy, eternal life, are in one word, JESUS. The possession of all are in one word, BELIEVE. After Christian and

Hopeful had seen "horrors and torments" till they trembled, the shepherds led them to the top of a high hill called Clear, and bade them look towards the Celestial City through their "perspective glass." Then they went on their way singing towards the eternal day.

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## THE TABERNACLE

*Exodus xl. 1-16, 34-38.*

DOES the tabernacle in the wilderness seem too far off and long ago to have a place in present-day thought? Perhaps you think those Hebrews were crude and ignorant, and that God taught them in a way suited to their understanding, as we teach little children in the kindergarten; but that we, more enlightened, have no use for such instruction? Well, you may use the comparison of the kindergarten if you will, but you must remember that the basis of kindergarten teaching is the imperishable truth which its methods illustrate. I do not, however, believe that such teaching was any better suited to the men and women of those days than to us, nor that they were so far below us in ability to understand spiritual truth. Not one of us can comprehend the vital teachings revealed through the visible tabernacle

more intelligently and clearly than they, unless the Holy Spirit show them to us. It is for our instruction as it was for theirs. It was made after the pattern of things in heaven showed to Moses during those forty days when he was alone with God on Sinai. These are things that remain. Spiritual realities do not change. What God would teach then He would teach now. To set aside as a thing of the past this exquisite structure of fine wrought linen and gold, with all that it contained, is to set aside the beauty and blessing of the spiritual life, and the realities of heaven which alone abide when the fashion of this world passes away. The tabernacle was the "place of meeting" between God and men. It was not by chance or fancy that directions for making it were so minute, and Moses was enjoined to follow strictly the pattern shown him. All were "figures of the true," "example and shadow of heavenly [or spiritual] things." Study it earnestly. Read it in the light of the eighth, ninth, and tenth chapters of Hebrews. It teaches foundation truth upon which the hope of every human soul must rest.

In the outer court, open to all, is the altar for burnt offering. "There's a wideness in God's mercy." "Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." "He is the propitiation . . . for the sins of the whole world." Next is the



laver for the cleansing of those who should enter the sacred inclosure. "According to His mercy He saved us by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost." "Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit he cannot enter the kingdom of God." Within the tabernacle curtain, separate from the outer court, nearer the most holy place, stand the table of showbread, the golden candlesticks with burning lamps, and the altar of incense. "I am the living bread; he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me." "I am the light of the world. He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness." "In the midst of the golden candlesticks one like unto the Son of man." "And the smoke of the incense with the prayers of the saints ascended up before God." Food for the soul; illumination; communion in prayer, for all who come by the altar, cleansed in the laver, into the holy place. But within the veil, in the most holy place, is the ark of the covenant, with the tables of the law, Aaron's rod that budded, the pot of manna, the cherubim made of one piece with the ark, the mercy seat, and the glory of God's presence filling the place!—all things complete in Christ Jesus. The law fulfilled; in Him bringing forth much fruit; in Him eating the hidden manna; in Him partakers of the divine nature; in Him coming boldly to the mercy

seat. But dare we enter? Once a year the holy of holies was open only to the high priest. Washed in His blood (Rev. i. 6), we are made "priests unto God"; and when the sun withdrew its light and earth trembled in the presence of that great Sacrifice on Calvary the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, and we now have "liberty to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus," and all that is revealed in the tabernacle symbolism is ours in "full assurance of faith"—universal atonement; the free gift of the regenerating Spirit; communion with God; food for the soul; light for the mind; effectual prayer; fullness of blessing in Jesus; for the world, for the individual spiritual life, for humanity in the ages to come, when the "great voice from heaven will be heard saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God."

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## THE SABBATH

*Exodus xx. 8-11; Luke xiii. 10-17.*

JESUS came not to destroy the law, but to fulfill it. The Sabbath law is fulfilled in His example, His teaching, and in His spirit in our



hearts. The Pharisees were great champions of the external. With them, to do was more than to be. They had a conscience about tithing mint, anise, and cummin, but they could do almost anything contrary to justice and mercy, and walking humbly with God. Morality and obedience meant to them the keeping of the exact letter of the law—not God’s law as He wrote it, but according to their own interpretation of what God had said. This is dangerous ground. One may slip there, down to narrowness and hardness quite out of harmony with God’s good will. His law is the law of liberty. Morality and religion are things of the heart. Jesus taught this truth with emphasis. The Pharisees had a kind of religion that separated them from everybody else; a “stand aside for I am holier than thou” attitude towards the “masses” who did not know the six hundred and thirteen laws they counted up in the Scriptures, with their own traditions added. Very different was the attitude of Jesus. He was always saying, “Come”; always trying to show all sorts and conditions of men that God loved them and that His laws were made not to oppress, but to do them good. Whenever we begin to interpret any part of God’s word in a way impossible for everybody to keep it, we are getting like the Pharisees, and away from the mind and spirit of Jesus.

If there is anything anybody cannot share in, cannot have the benefit of, cannot use as God wants it to be used, that thing is not true religion, is not God's law, for He is the universal Father and what He requires is for the universal good. This is Jesus' teaching concerning the Sabbath. It was "made for man," for man whom He loves and whose welfare is His chief concern. When the Pharisees said men ought to go hungry rather than break the letter of the law by rubbing corn from the cob on the Sabbath, and that a withered arm should not be healed on that day, Jesus said the true spirit of the Sabbath law would be broken by letting any creature suffer, and that the real keeping of the day holy was in doing good.

While Jesus taught that the spirit of Sabbath-keeping was more than the letter, He never failed in its outward observance. It was "His custom" to go to the synagogue on that day. If we from choice, or from force of circumstances, fail to follow His example we suffer loss. The day may be kept in spirit apart from public worship; but if churches were closed, if no Gospel were preached, if the sweet sound of hymn and prayer were unheard, what would the nation be? What would our homes become? Where would be the restraints upon lawlessness? If factories and shops were not closed, what would become of the people who

work? Here is our responsibility. We are not keeping the Sabbath law unless we are considering in our spirit and conduct what is best, not only for ourselves, but for the community. The Sabbath is made for man; alas for him if he throws away this most precious gift! It ought to be the best and brightest day of the seven. The body should have rest; the mind and the soul should be fed. On an old tablet dug from the ruins of Assyria one day of the week is mentioned as "a day of rest for the heart." Beautiful name for the Sabbath. Let us try to make it this sort of a day for everybody. My memory keeps a beautiful picture in a lovely setting. It is Sunday in the old home. I see the little country church with its simple worship; the Sunday-school; the little red Testament out of which I learned chapters and chapters "by heart." I see the steps leading down to the river where I used to sit and read; week day papers were put away, and I had only "Sunday books and papers" to read. It was very old-fashioned, but I am glad it was ordered so. I am none the worse for it now. I see the table with the evening lamp, and all the household gathered to read aloud in turn, chapters from the dear old Book. Was it irksome? Oh, no; it was happy and sweet then, and dear to remember now. The voices that were there are all gone from earth, except my

own ; but the hymns and the words of the Book sing on in my heart in harmony with the music of our Father's home in heaven.

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### “ON NEBO'S LONELY MOUNTAIN”

*Deuteronomy xxxiv. 5-12.*

“So Moses the servant of the Lord died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the Lord. And He buried him in a valley ; but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.” It was a fitting passing of a kingly soul to wear the victor's crown. Beth-peor was not the place of defeat. I cannot think the man whose last words were a song of victory was disappointed when the Lord showed him all the land of Gilead unto Dan, and at the same moment opened before him that fairer country of which Canaan was the imperfect type. He had carried to completion his difficult life-mission. Long, wearisome, full of trying experiences the wilderness journey had been ; but Moses had learned there the soul's sweetest lessons. He had learned to obey, to believe, and to talk with God face to face as one talks with a friend. It would seem, looking not beyond present gain, that he should have been rewarded with the honor of leading the people

he had brought thus far victoriously over Jordan. But God had better things for His servant—not Canaan with its struggles and failures, but heaven with its triumphs and peace.

How often we say it is strange God calls His useful people from this world just when they seem ready to accomplish the most in life. Let us remember Moses, the servant of the Lord. His death was not an accident, nor because his powers had waned; it was according to the word of the Lord. “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” To lay down work at His call is not failure. To enter the fellowship and activities of heaven is better than to share the goodliest fruits of any earthly Canaan. And if it really was a disappointment not to go over into the promised land God made up even that to him, for “He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him.”

“Of heaven’s bliss is naught more wondrous told us  
Than these few words, ‘I shall be satisfied.’”

On the mountain of transfiguration, in Judea, Moses stood and talked with Jesus of that great sacrifice at Jerusalem, understanding after ages of heaven’s scholarship, as he could not understand when he saw the promised land from Pisgah, the higher, broader, deeper plans of God for him and for the chosen people. Let us be patient; let us wait. When God takes

from us one whose presence here seems most necessary, and whose loss is grievous to ourselves and to some good work in the world, let us remember how Moses in a great emergency went away according to the word of the Lord, and let us wait for our mount of transfiguration, where in heaven's clear air what once were sighs of sorrow will be songs of praise.

“Oh, lonely tomb in Moab's land !  
Oh, dark Beth-peor's hill !  
Speak to these curious hearts of ours,  
And teach them to be still.  
God hath His mysteries of grace,  
Ways that we cannot tell ;  
He hides them deep like the secret sleep  
Of him He loved so well.”

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## INTO CANAAN

*Joshua iii. ; iv. 1-9.*

SWEET, precious lesson is this of a covenant-keeping God. Why these wilderness pilgrims should come to Jordan when it overflowed all its banks and was unusually difficult to cross, who shall say? Did God so plan for them? Or was it because they had been disobedient, rebellious, unbelieving, so that now there was no easier way than this to get to Canaan? The lesson is the same for us in either case.



Whether through no fault of their own, or through their own misguided ways, here they were, facing a great difficulty, a danger that looked overwhelming. But they were God's chosen people; He had a purpose of blessing for them; He is ever mindful of His covenant. So, never minding *why* they are at Jordan at this most difficult time of the year, He provides the way to get them safely through.

Into the turbulent waters before them went the ark of the covenant. "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee." What, Lord Jesus, through the waters of my own mistakes and follies? "Fear thou not, for I have redeemed thee; I have called thee by My name; thou art Mine." Oh, troubled soul, come near and hear the words of the Lord, your God; come near in prayer; come near in faith; come near in humble trust, and behold the ark of the covenant of the Lord of all the earth, Jesus, passeth before you into any Jordan you may have to cross. Only be very reverent. Do not presume upon His deliverance without obeying His commands. There was a space kept between the people and the ark so that they might plainly see its leading, for this was a new experience and they needed special guidance. "Impatient heart, be still." Wait on the Lord.

And it came to pass that the waters which

came down from above, and those that came down towards the sea of the plain were cut off, and the people passed over. No matter from what direction the threatening troubles come, the Lord of all the earth may be safely trusted to manage them in the interests of all who follow Him.

“What ailed thee, oh, thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back?” (Ps. cxiv. 5.) So the world wonders how Christians pass victoriously through sorrows that sweep others from faith’s foundations. The feet of the priests that bore the ark stood firm in the midst of Jordan. We who are Christ’s are made “priests unto Him.” We bear Him before the eyes of the world. They do not see Him, but they do see whether we stand firm in threatening Jordans. If we falter, if we fail in word or look or spirit to prove that we pass victoriously through temptation or trial how shall they believe in the God whom we so dishonor?

Safely over Jordan, twelve stones of remembrance and of gratitude were set up where all could see. And in the place where the feet of the priests stood, in the midst of Jordan, covered by its waves, twelve other stones were laid. What memorials have we made of deliverance from trial? What thank-offerings that others may see our recognition of the divine hand? And in the secret of our heart where



only God sees, have we put the memorial of a new consecration, a truer service, a more self-denying love?

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## OVER JORDAN

*Joshua vi. 1-16.*

OVER Jordan, into Canaan, and what now? Rest? Ease? Never a battle? Never a difficulty? Not so, indeed; fighting there was, plenty of it, for there were giants to conquer, walled cities to be possessed, and the kings of that country would not yield their territory without a struggle. But for Israel it was victory and conquest every time except at Ai, where they cherished sin among themselves. When that was put away, after a long, strong battle every inhabitant was destroyed and Ai was burned to a desolation. God promised to give them every place the soles of their feet should tread upon, and He kept His word. He says too that the saints of the Most High shall possess the kingdom, and the saints shall judge the world. He will keep His word forever.

Over your own Jordan, the decision by which you passed out of your old life of self and sin into the new life in Christ, what then? Never a temptation, a hardship, a fight with any foe of your soul? Oh, no! The fight has but begun;

for when you lived in careless indifference, out of sympathy with God and goodness, you yielded to your soul's enemies and let them carry you captive. Now you have seen the riches of Canaan. There is an awakening of your soul's desire for the better things. You know there are for you possessions of righteousness, godliness, love, patience, meekness, power to serve, victory over faults of character which look hateful to you since you have seen the loveliness of Jesus. These blessings are assured to you as fully as Jericho was given to Joshua, but not unless you do your part towards taking possession. The territory of the pure and blessed life belongs to God, and He has promised to give it to you; but Satan will fight hard to keep you from it. The Christian life is a paradox. In one sense it is the only life of quietness and peace; in another it is a warfare in which we must endure hardness as good soldiers of Jesus Christ. The Christian warfare is unlike any other. Paul calls it "the good fight of faith." I think this story of Jericho illustrates his meaning.

In the first place we see it is not Joshua nor the people, but the Lord Jesus who is leader and conqueror. Before even Joshua attempted to take Jericho he had a personal meeting with Him, recognized Him as leader, and asked with reverent humility, "What saith my Lord unto

His servant?" This is the first step towards victory. Have you, in the beginning of your Christian life, seen Jesus face to face? Have you taken Him as your leader? Do you each day ask, and wait to hear, what saith the Lord unto His servant?

As the march towards Jericho advances, in the midst of the host is the ark of the covenant; He who led them over the Jordan is still their wisdom and strength. "Without Me ye can do nothing." "I can do all things through Christ." Having Jesus as leader, counsellor, dwelling within us, victory is sure. We have only to obey and trust. Obey fully, without question. Seven days they compassed Jericho with the ark of the Lord, and on the seventh day, seven times. Seven is the number of completion. And when they had simply and faithfully obeyed the instructions the Lord had given, not discouraged nor stopping short of anything He had commanded, the wall fell down flat and they took the city.

This is the good fight of faith. Jesus our Leader; Jesus our Guide; Jesus our Counsellor; Jesus our Companion; Jesus in the midst of our life, the centre and the moving force of all; then with loyal obedience to His word to meet trial, temptation, and difficulty, and to find that in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him.

## THE HEART OF A CHILD

*1 Sam. i.-iii.*

To explain the characteristics of a man they say we must go back to his mother, and still farther to his grandmother. St. Paul reminds Timothy of his obligation to stir up the gift in himself because of the faith of his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice. A Christian ancestry is a blessed inheritance. Never sell your birthright by dishonoring or turning away from the faith of your fathers. But children do not always walk in the footsteps of good parents. Sometimes they go far astray, for goodness is not inherited, or, rather, the grace that saves is not inherited; it must be the choice of each soul. Certainly the responsibility of right thinking and pure living is greater for those who have had Christian training than for those who have not. The sons of Samuel were not like their father, nor like their good, praying grandmother. Perhaps it was their mother's fault. Nothing is said about her, so we do not know. Mothers have great responsibility, although I sometimes think they are held for too much, and the fathers are relieved of their proper share. However, whatever mothers do, or leave undone, the final responsibility comes

upon the sons and daughters for their own choice of right or wrong.

There is much in the story of the boy Samuel to encourage all who have the care of little children. He was a tiny child when his mother dedicated him to the Lord ; a little boy when God called him and he obediently answered, "Speak, Lord ; for Thy servant heareth." Very young children may be taught the most precious thoughts of God. To our latest day and farthest reach of study they pass our understanding, and the older and wiser we grow we find that we enter the kingdom of heaven only "as little children." The blessed Spirit adapts His teaching to the tender heart of a child. Do not lose the sweet pleasure of sowing good seed before the tares have taken root.

A little fellow only eight years old asked, "Mother, what is it to give your heart to Christ?" His mother tried to make it plain to his understanding, and many times during that week she found him kneeling in prayer. One evening on her return home he bounded through the hall to meet her, exclaiming, "Mother, I've become a Christian while you've been gone. I have, I have! I know I have, and I'm so happy I don't know what to do." His mother took him on her lap, saying, "Tell me all about it." After thinking a moment he

said: "I was praying, and I thought of the little verse you taught me to say when I was five years old:

" ' I know my heart is full of sin,  
I am not fit for heaven,  
But Christ has died upon the cross  
That I might be forgiven ;'

and, mother, I thought if He had, God might forgive me just as well as not, and I told Him so. And then I remembered that other little verse,

" ' Jesus loves me, this I know,  
For the Bible tells me so,'

and I thought if He did love me and He knew how much I wanted to be a Christian, and He could make me one, He would; and He did, and I love Him ever so much; and He loves me too." From that hour he never wavered in his faith. Of course he was not perfection; who is? But when he did wrong he would say, "I am God's child, even though I have been naughty, just as I am your little boy, mother, even when I am not as good as I ought to be." This boy is a preacher of the Gospel now. If his mother had thought him too young to understand when he asked what it meant to give his heart to God he might have been, to her sorrow, something very different.

Have you, like Hannah, a burdened heart? Pour it out before the Lord and go away with a countenance no more sad, trusting Him for the answer. When He gives what you have asked, whatever it is, give it back to Him, thankfully, to be used in His service, and remember that the same voice which called the boy Samuel says of all little children, "Suffer them to come unto Me, for of such is the kingdom of heaven."

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## A LOVE STORY

### *The Book of Ruth.*

No sweeter story was ever written than this, of the little family of four who went up from Bethlehem to Moab, and the two maidens who there joined fortune with them. The simplicity and pathos of the Bible writer cannot be excelled. It is a story of domestic love; of suffering, sympathy, unselfishness, purity, fidelity. We need to hear it over and over again to counteract the cold self-interest, the thirst for place and power, for money, for social position and pleasure, too often gratified at the expense of those virtues of the heart which, like flowers in secluded dells, are precious because God delights in them although no human eyes may see their charm.



This is a love story—love of the purest type. Our hearts will grow gentle as we take in its spirit. St. John, whose distinguishing grace was love, says, “Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God.” Cultivate love ; live in love ! do nothing to grieve love ; love with all your might ; you cannot love too much, for love is of God. It is the sweetest, dearest, most blessed thing in the universe ; the most like heaven of anything left to this earth since the tragedy in Eden. Put God’s love first, home love next, self-love last. Do not break your mother’s or your father’s heart by neglect. Oh, be careful never to wound any heart that loves you. Sins against love jar the harmony of creation ; and what shall we say of sins against the divine love ?

I cannot read in this story, as some have read, that Elimelech and Naomi brought misfortune upon themselves by committing sin in going to Moab. They were people of principle whose change of residence did not affect their religious belief or habits. They were true to the God of Israel though they lived in a heathen country. Ten years spent in such associations had their influence upon Ruth and Orpah. They respected a religion consistently adhered to, although so different from their own. Naomi was no bigot ; she did not repel these young women by severe criticism of the way



they had been brought up, but found the royal road to their hearts by gentleness and goodness. She was very unlike the woman who vowed years ago, and kept her vow until she died, that she would never speak to her husband, who was an atheist, until he should tell her that he believed in God. He never told her so. How could she expect it, with such an unloving spirit upon her part? And yet she prayed for him every day. Naomi's living was better than this woman's praying.

It was not easy to leave Bethlehem with its lifelong associations, but when Elimelech proposed it no doubt her first thought was, "It will be better for the boys," so she hopefully started on the long journey. Sorrow waited for her, and entered the new home with her. "Her husband died and she was left;" that is all there is to tell, but how much to live, to suffer, to endure! Far from friends, two boys to care for, Naomi alone with God. Then came two maidens with the cheer of youth into the broken household. Happily for their mother, Mahlon and Chilion made wise choices in marriage. But grief quickly followed joy, as is its way

"Since sorrow set her bleeding heart  
On this fair world of ours."

The love of these three women grew closer and sweeter in affliction. Naomi forgot her

own trouble in caring for others. She said, "It grieveth me much for your sakes that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me." No wonder it was hard for Orpah to say good-bye to such a strong, sweet soul. No wonder Ruth entreated to go with her and chose her God for her own.

The story of Ruth's fortunes in the land of her adoption has phases strange to us whose usages are so different from those of that time and country. But it glows with the beauty of purity, integrity, and faith. All the city knew that her character stood, with Naomi's, for nobility and truth, above reproach. And the end of this love story? A faithful heart tossed on rough seas through a long day, quiet at last in life's evening, in the love of those to whom she has unselfishly ministered, neighbors and friends rejoicing with her. Another heart, chastened by sorrow, "finding rest," as the beautiful Bible phrase has it, with a true, noble husband; and a child's sweet voice making melody again like that Naomi used to hear in Bethlehem-Judah long ago. Could Naomi and Ruth have known what we know to-day they would have seen a chain of little hands reaching from Obed's to the hand of the Christ-child in the manger in Bethlehem ages afterwards; the hand of the world's Redeemer, the hand of Love and Might controlling the destinies of

nations and men. God was making all things work for good even when Naomi thought He dealt bitterly with her.

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## ELIJAH

### *1 Kings xvii.*

“WHERE is the Lord God of Elijah?” Elisha asked when a great crisis was before him. This question is answered for us, as for him, in daily revealings of His power and love on our behalf. But who shall answer, “Here,” when one asks, “Where is the one who believes and trusts the Lord God of Elijah?” Perhaps, after we have pondered this dear old story of God taking care of His servant we shall grow more worthy to be counted with His believing, trusting children.

These circumstances were peculiarly trying to Elijah’s faith. The drought from which he suffered was sent in answer to his own prayer. The people had gone far away from God; Elijah remembered that God had said (Deut. xi. 14–17) the withholding of rain should be the punishment for idolatry; so, to bring them back to God, he “prayed earnestly that it might not rain.” The prayer was answered, but Elijah suffered in the answer. This is not

a singular experience with God's people. We pray for a deeper spiritual life, or for the conversion of a soul. Sorrows, disappointments, adversities, befall us and those for whom we pray; faith is sorely tried; but all the while God is answering our prayer in these very things which seem so against us.

As the prophet sat beside the brook from which the Lord had promised he should drink, he saw the waters dry away day by day, until only barren sand was left. Had God forgotten? Elijah would have thought so had his faith been like ours too often is. A little girl, belonging to a family of eleven children with only their mother to care for them, was asked what her mother depended upon for their daily food. She replied, "My mother trusts in God. She never tells us how God is going to help, but she is always certain help will come in the right time." "But we must be governed by reason," said the other. "Nothing is said in the Bible about reason," the child replied. "It is written, 'He that believeth shall not be ashamed.'"

One step at a time God leads us, and often each step is a deeper test of faith. From Cherith to Zarephath seemed a strange leading, for the woman to whom he was sent was herself on the verge of despair through the scarceness of her daily bread. But what a comfort his strong words of faith and promise

must have been to her! "Fear not; for thus saith the Lord God of Israel." She was probably not a worshipper of Elijah's God, but her fainting heart caught the inspiration of his faith, and after a while she saw for herself that "the word of the Lord is truth." It is blessed to share our sorrow with another when we share our comfort too. Out of her own poverty this woman ministered to Elijah's need; he gave in return heart-comfort from his wealth of faith in God.

We can add nothing to this sweet story. Read it, and take its simple teaching just as it is written. It is told for the strengthening of our faith and the encouragement of a childlike trust.

"Elijah's God is watching,  
Though He may be concealed;  
When fails the brook of Cherith  
His care shall be revealed.  
Forth to some fair Sarepta  
His faithful hand shall lead,  
And there His wondrous bounty  
Will meet my every need.

"And so I sit by Cherith,  
In God's appointed place,  
And see without complaining  
The waters fail apace.  
For faith and trust are with me,  
My comfort and my stay;  
I hear the Spirit whisper:  
'God will provide always.'"

## "CARRY HIM TO HIS MOTHER"

*2 Kings iv. 8-37.*

THIS is one of the sweetest of Bible stories. It introduces us to a woman of noble character, one of those of whom Solomon says, "Her price is above rubies; the heart of her husband doth safely trust in her." It would have been a pleasure to know this woman if our lot had been cast in those long-ago days. And it is a joy to count many like her among our friends now. Wealth did not make her selfish. It added to her own comfort to feel that others were comfortable. She understood true hospitality. It is quite likely that Elisha when he came to Shunem was often tired in body and mind, for usually he came from or was upon his way to some place where there was work to tax him physically and mentally. And so this woman fitted up a quiet little room where he could rest and need not feel obliged to be "company." I can think of him lying at ease on one such weary day, as much refreshed by the knowledge that some one was "careful for him with all this care" as by the restful conveniences around him. Of course he could not accept this kindness without wishing to make some adequate return to his hostess. He gave



her the best he could offer, of far more value than any material gift, the promise of the fulfillment of her heart's dearest wish. He asked this gift from God, for He alone could bestow it. This is the way we often may reciprocate. To one is given the ability to minister to another in material things, while the only return which can be made is a spiritual ministry of prayer and counsel and sympathy. “As ye have received the gift, even so minister one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.”

This happy home was made brighter still by the winsome life of a little child. What volumes are in this simple story! Such a mother must have lived in deep heart experiences. There came a day when the shadow fell. Every mother with an only son knows the deep significance of the words, “She held him in her arms until noon, and then he died.”

The strength and symmetry of character is shown in sorrow as in joy. This woman is an example of quiet faith and self-control, worthy to be studied. Leaving her treasure in the little room sacred with memories of the promise, she hastened to the prophet. Her calm assurance, “It is well,” her reminding him of her implicit trust in his word as God's messenger, and her immovable purpose not to leave him until he had come himself to her boy, showed the true soul of the woman. Just as to that other

mother Jesus said, "Oh, woman, great is thy faith; be it unto thee even as thou wilt," so to this mother was given faith's rich reward. No miracle will restore our dead to life nor bring back to us any of our human treasures which the hot sun of life has smitten unto death. But loving service, noble character, and trusting faith will find forever their full reward.

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## GOD OR BAAL

*1 Kings xviii. 17-46.*

COME up to the heights of Carmel. There is a view here of the promises, the faithfulness, and the power of God that will cheer you as you walk through the valleys that lie in the shadow of mountains along your way. There is vital air on Carmel. It quickens the pulse and strengthens the heart. Here is a man who has been praying that God would reveal Himself to the conscience of a wicked people. He has himself suffered in answer to his own prayer. But in everything he has followed the word of the Lord with a surrendered will, not seeking his own way. The seeming impossibilities of that word were more possible to his faith than the hoped-for success of any human purpose or plan. He was sure of Him whom



he believed. He could afford to give the priests of Baal every advantage: four hundred and fifty against one; all the time they asked to make a trial of their god; nothing to hinder their fire from burning while water filled the trenches round about Jehovah's altar. How gloriously he trusted! God was to him a real and conscious presence. Prayer with him was talking with God about a definite thing for a definite result. His life motto was, "As the Lord God liveth before whom I stand." A real and present God, in whose sight I live and to whom I am responsible—this gives vigor and meaning to the dullest round of duties, and holds in wise control life's eager haste and pressure.

Contrast with this blessed consciousness the emptiness of a heart that knows no God like ours. "There was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded." Oh, pitiful silence when the heart cries out for help! There are so many who do thus cry in vain. If you really know and believe your God hasten to make Him known to them. A heathen woman asked: "How is it the women of your country have not told us this good news before? Do they not know their God? or do they not care about us?"

Elijah was like us in human infirmities. We may be like him in zeal for God among the

worshippers of Baal. We may be like him in faith and courage, for we have the resources of his strength. The God who answered by fire on Mount Carmel answers by the fire of the Holy Spirit when the altar is prepared for Him. Effectual prayer avails for us as it availed for him. It was based upon the promise of God: "I will send rain upon the earth." It was definite: he prayed that it might rain. It was for the glory of God: "Let it be known this day that Thou art God in Israel." It was humble: he cast himself upon the ground with his face between his knees. It was expectant: he sent his servant to look for the answer. It was persistent: he sent seven times. It was believing: a cloud little as a man's hand was for him the assurance of abundance of rain.

"Oh, wondrous power of faithful prayer,  
What tongue can tell the almighty grace;  
God's hands are bound, or open are,  
As Moses or Elijah prays."

Surely the Lord is God; let us follow Him.  
Let us slay all the prophets of Baal and suffer  
no rival to Him in our hearts.

## WAITING

*1 Kings xviii. 1-16.*

ELIJAH had learned "to fear man little because he feared God much." "Jehovah, before whom I stand," was his controlling conviction and assertion. He was the hero of loyalty. God's word was law; God's approval was satisfaction. Ahab had searched every nation and kingdom to find and to kill him, but at the command of God he went to show himself to the angry king without a tremor of fear. "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" asked Ahab as the grand old man stood before him. "I have not troubled Israel," was the fearless answer, "but thou and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord and have followed Baalim." As sinners usually do, Ahab blamed some one else for the consequences of his own wrong-doing. The man at the foot of the ladder never thinks it his own fault that he is not at the top. Even God is held responsible for the world's misfortune and sin. How Jezebel hated Elijah because he said the famine would be the result of her shameless idolatry! Sin resents righteousness. "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light lest his deeds should be re-proved." To hide our sin, or put the blame of

it upon any one except ourselves only leads to deeper trouble. He that covereth his sins shall not prosper, but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall find mercy.

One sentence in this chapter holds a volume of thought. "And it came to pass after many days that the word of the Lord came to Elijah." Oh, the waiting, the sorrow, the suffering of those many days when the famine was sore in the land! Think of the patience of God, seeing the suffering yet waiting the right time to send the longed-for rain. So through the ages He waits. He does not forget. He knows the anguish of the nations; the pain of every heart. He will speak when the hand points to the hour for deliverance.

"Wait thou His time, so shall this night  
Soon end in joyous day."

There is long preparation for the bursting of a flower into bloom. The husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth and hath long patience for it until he receive the early and the latter rain; be ye also patient; stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth near.

After many days. Days of waiting; days of famine; days of questioning; but days of watching and unchanging purpose in the thought of God.

## WHY CAST DOWN ?

*1 Kings xix. 19-21.*

WHAT we learn from Elijah's experience is helpful because it is practical. This "man of like passions with us" talks straight to our heart. Discouraged because he was worn out, God's messenger showed him that he needed rest and food. It is of no use to tell a tired, hungry person to cheer up until you give him what his body needs. Gospel missions that provide the tramp a good breakfast on Sunday morning before the prayer-meeting show the wisdom that comes from above. How close it brings us to the heart of God when we hear His angel say, "Arise, and eat, for the journey is too great for thee." "Your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things."

But something more than physical supplies is needed for a disheartened soul. There are people never tired and never hungry, yet sorely discouraged. Even when his body was rested, Elijah took a very dismal view of the situation. The nation was going to destruction ; he was the only one left to help it ; his own life was in danger, and what would become of things if indeed he should be taken away ! Then the Lord offered him the only radical cure for a

troubled mind. It was David's remedy: "Why art thou cast down, oh, my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? *Hope thou in God.*" Is there any reason for despair in any situation of personal affairs, in the church, in the world, in the Sunday-school class, while God lives, and knows, and cares? Once, to an old monk God said in a vision, "Poor little man, thinkest thou that I who rule the universe cannot direct thy little order?" So God showed Elijah that in quietness and confidence was his strength. Not in the boisterous wind of anxious, overstrained work; not in the sudden upheaval of customs and conditions through violent reforms; not in the fire of hot fury against wrong; but in the steady perseverance of love and faith and duty all that the prophet desired should be done, because God is in such service and nothing can withstand God. So when Elijah repeated his gloomy refrain God only bade him go on his way—right on through the wilderness, expecting no startling interference of miraculous power. He was to anoint Hazael and Jehu, which to the people would seem commonplace events with which God was not concerned; and yet they were a part of His plan for the nation.

Another thing he was to do—the hardest ever asked of one who has filled a conspicuous place. He must resign his office and anoint



another to take it. Moreover, he was made to understand that with all his strength and zeal for the cause of God he was not necessary to its success, for God knew seven thousand men of whom Elijah had never heard who could do Elijah's work while he was thinking, "I, even I only, am left."

God manages, not we. He can use us or He can do without us. To hear and to obey His voice is the service that pleases Him best. But oh, if Elijah had seen then the chariot and horsemen coming to take him to heaven it would not have been hard to go on with life's common tasks nor even to give up his work to another.

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## THE CHARIOT

*1 Kings xix. 1-8 ; 2 Kings ii. 1-18.*

THERE is something very pathetic, very human, in this picture of the great, strong-hearted man under the juniper tree. So down-hearted was he that he preferred to be utterly alone in the wilderness. He left his servant at Beer-sheba ; he wanted no one to speak to him, and he wanted to speak to nobody. There are depths of discouragement beyond the reach of human sympathy. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger intermeddleth not

therewith." But there is no depth beyond the reach of the divine sympathy. Thank God for the "touch" of the angel of the Lord! How considerate and wise was this blessed comforter! Never a word of upbraiding did He say to this discouraged soul. He might have said, "Elijah, it is a shame for you, after that wonderful victory on Carmel, and those abundant showers of rain, to give way to such depression; why should you run away in fear from Jezebel when you know so well what your God can do for you?" But "He knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust," so, "as one whom his mother comforteth," He took His tired child to His heart, and gave him the kind of comfort he needed most.

A rested body is often the best cure for a tired soul. Elijah had been under a great strain. It consumed a vast amount of nervous force to stand for God on Carmel against the hosts of Baal. The soul exhausts the body when it "prays earnestly" as Elijah prayed. The inner life wears on us more than the outward "work" which our friends sometimes think is too much for us. God understands. He sends His angel, not to upbraid, nor to chide, but to say, "Arise and eat, sleep and rest; take care of your body; do not try to do more than you can; I know the journey is too great for thee." His angel speaks through human lips,



and brings refreshment by human hands. Let us be watchful so that He may use us to strengthen and restore His faithful, tired servants.

But while he did not chide Elijah the angel of the Lord knew there was really no reason for his discouragement, and he knew Elijah would see it so when his nerves were in better condition. A quaint, sensible old minister of the Gospel used to say, "Never settle with the devil on a dark day; he will get the best of you." Come out in the sunshine, in the light of God, and you will see things in their true proportions. Elijah was not the failure he seemed to himself. Jezebel had no power to kill him. Things were not as they looked. God had everything in hand. Elijah thought it would be good to die, but God had something so much better for him—a royal chariot sweeping past the gates of death through an open way into immortal life. He has always something better for us than we think. He understands our discouragements; He pities and comforts us. But He knows there is no real reason for discouragement, for if God be for us who can be against us? So let us go in the strength He gives us "unto Horeb the Mount of God." What is that mountain? Where is it? It is the mountain of His righteousness, His faithfulness, His wisdom, His power, His

justice, His love. Let us take His hand and climb this height. Here the air is clear, the sight reaches beyond the clouds; here His chariots wait for us; it is easy to step into them, and it is not very far to heaven.

Elijah's last days were spent as his whole life had been, in the service of his God. One who walks, talks, and lives with God every day has no need to change his thinking or doing before seeing the Lord face to face in paradise. That is only a fuller, nearer companionship than is possible while yet the flesh enfolds us.

There are different kinds of service. Perhaps Elijah realized towards the end more than in the beginning of his vigorous career that the quiet walk of duty, the personal touch of life upon life, the unrecorded ministries, are even more effective for enduring good than spectacular exhibitions of faith and energy, such as were seen on Carmel. The still small voice within sent him from Gilgal to Beth-el, from Beth-el to Jericho, to visit the students in the training schools. We do not know what he said to them, but he must have impressed them, either by the spiritual atmosphere about him or by some expressions which they only half understood, that the time of his departure was near; for at Beth-el and at Jericho they asked Elisha if he knew the Lord would take away his master that very day.

Elisha found the sweet reward of adherence to duty. Although urged to leave him, by most solemn protests he declared he would go with his master wherever the Lord should send him. So at the last he had a vision of the very gates of glory. "Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven, and Elisha saw it." Blessed spiritual sight! Fifty of the sons of the prophets stood to "view afar off," and they saw such a little way that they thought God had hid their translated teacher in the mountains or the valleys. They could not believe the supernatural. But the man whose whole soul had asked for a double portion of Elijah's spirit, which was the indwelling Spirit of God, saw the invisible—the sight which inspires faith and courage for work or for endurance.

It is only a little way to heaven; it is easy for God to send His chariot any day for any one of us, when His time has come for us to go. If we are ready it does not matter whether we go through the gates of death or pass over them untouched, "for so shall we be forever with the Lord."

## “ THUS AND THUS SAID THE MAID ”

*2 Kings v. 1-14.*

LITTLE she dreamed how far her words would reach. “Death and life are in the power of the tongue.” “They say” are two short powerful words. They have wrought the ruin of reputation and have wounded many a heart deserving pity rather than blame. “They say” she does so and so. “They say” he is this or that. “They say” is a seed that grows faster than weeds after rain. Be careful how you repeat what “they say.” What we call little things are the cause of great things. Saint James says of the use of the tongue, “Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth.” Any one of us can give a chapter of illustrations upon this every-day truth.

But if a word may work great harm, so, too, it may be the spring of ceaseless streams of good. “They say” was a power well used in the case of this little captive girl. “Thus and thus” she was reported as saying, and from the far-away ages there is flowing from those true little lips sweetness and blessing through our hearts to-day. The fountain of her heart sent forth sweet waters. Let us see. She must have been a cheerful child, making the best of her

circumstances. She was a captive, and naturally would long to see her home and friends in Samaria. But she attended cheerfully to present duties, waiting upon Naaman's wife. She must have been a faithful and agreeable little maid, or else her mistress would not have listened to what she had to say. She would have dismissed a meddling, intrusive child with an imperative “That is none of your concern; attend to your own duties.” But the maid had a kind and sympathetic heart. She was truly sorry for the one great sorrow that shadowed the life of the home where she was herself a captive. She remembered the teaching of her old Hebrew home and believed in the true God, though everybody around her worshipped the idols of Syria. Her words would have been very different had she been another sort of girl; but she was cheerful, faithful, attentive to her duties, self-forgetful, and true to the God she had at home been taught to love and to serve. The fountain of such a heart sends forth only sweet waters; and so from the words of this little maid flows the stream of faith which this story teaches to-day. Naaman was a leper. Leprosy always is the symbol of sin. God alone could heal the leper. God alone can cleanse a heart from sin. No “great thing,” such as Naaman's pride expected, was done to heal him. He would have

gone home a leper still if he had not obeyed the prophet's words, "Wash and be clean."

No good works or robe of self-righteousness will remove sin from the heart. Pride must yield to the simple remedy, "Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved." Naaman could never explain to the wondering Syrian court how or why bathing in Jordan could heal him; but they could see by the change in the once leprous face and form that the cure was real. No one can explain how or why simple faith in the atoning Saviour changes a corrupt, bad man into a useful Christian citizen; but hundreds of lives witness to the fact that it is so. So here is the sweet old gospel story told us again because "thus and thus said the maid" long, long ago. Let the fountain of your heart be sweet, so that your words may never be evil, but fruitful in blessing. Out of your little circle of influence the widest good may flow.

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## HEART ANSWERS TO HEART

*2 Kings iv. 1-7.*

DOES it not seem as if this minister's widow might be our next-door neighbor? Her husband was a good man; she did not need to speak to



Elisha regarding his character, for Elisha had known him as a man who feared the Lord. But her husband was dead, and she was in financial distress. She had borne her anxiety up to the limit of endurance, and now she sought the sympathy and advice of a human friend. Happily for her, Elisha did not ask how she got in debt, nor did he blame her and her husband for mismanagement. Like a true friend, he at once sought for a way to help her. I heard a pastor say to his congregation recently that if there were more of this spirit of true friendliness in the church men would not go away to find it elsewhere. "Bear ye one another's burdens," is the beneficent law of Christ. With what good cheer must Elisha's sympathetic question have come to this solitary woman! "What shall I do for thee? Tell me, what hast thou in the house? I am ready to help, but what can you do for yourself?" This was wise sympathy. It is better to rouse one's self to think and act when the mind is distressed than to lean wholly upon the most sympathetic of friends. Do not brood over misfortune. Find something to do, and do it hopefully.

It was a somewhat despondent answer which the widow gave Elisha: "I have nothing in the house save a pot of oil;" and it seemed a useless thing to borrow empty vessels from neighbors who knew of her poverty. But Elisha

knew and had faith in the God of the widow and the fatherless. He was sure if this woman had the faith, the courage, and the energy to do her best God would not fail her. The neighbors probably wondered. Empty vessels must have seemed to them a most unlikely source of revenue to repair lost fortune. They knew nothing of the secret soul of the woman who was doing her best in such an unworldly-wise way. The way of faith is usually solitary. One has to "shut the door" and be alone with God. This woman did her very best to the very uttermost, in obedience and trust. She borrowed until there was not another vessel to be had and poured oil until every vessel was full. Her part faithfully performed, God honored her with the supply of all her needs.

The miracle of the oil is not repeated for us. But the significance of its teaching is shown in many a latter-day experience, similar to that of this widow. "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

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## THE UNSEEN

*2 Kings vi. 8-23.*

THE Syrian king was perplexed. Who was it that constantly thwarted his plans? Who



told his military secrets? Was there a traitor in his army? He inquired anxiously among his men and officers who it was that betrayed him, for it never occurred to him that there was any power outside of human strategy at work. Yet all the while an unseen Hand closed up the way here and there; sent his army hither and thither, only to be defeated, and gave victory to the Israelites against great apparent odds.

Elisha was in the secret. He had lived in sight and touch with spiritual forces ever since he became possessed with the desire to have a double portion of the Spirit of God. It is a blessed way to live, and it is not Elisha's exclusive privilege. A heart fully opened to God will have eyes to see. Such vision puts a new face upon life's common events as well as upon emergencies.

When the hosts surrounded them at Dothan Elisha, seeing the horses and chariots of heaven, was confident; the young man, seeing only the Syrians, was afraid. We all believe in a sort of vague way that God rules the affairs of this world. But how does He rule? Surely not by some intangible force which we call "His will," moving through space like the wind or heat or light. Even for the exercise of these powers in nature He uses material instruments. It is only reasonable to believe that He does

the same to carry out His purposes in the affairs of men.

The Lord Jesus sought constantly to bring the people in touch with the spiritual world. He talked of it as naturally as He spoke of the fields and flowers of Palestine. He often addressed His Father audibly so that those around might realize that God is a person, real and near. He said the little children were cared for by angels; when He was betrayed He said if He wished to do so He could call ten legions of angels to deliver Him; and in the hour of His agony in Gethsemane there came an angel to strengthen Him. "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, and thousands of angels." "Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation?"

This ministry of love is the occupation of the heavenly hosts. They are busy this very day and hour shielding, helping, comforting the weary, helpless ones which may not be aware of their presence. God is in His world. His warriors are on every battle-field. His purposes are coming to completion.

God is on the battle-fields of your life and mine. When the conflict seems unequal and we cry, "Alas! how shall we do?" may our eyes be opened to see the angels of the Lord encamping round about us to deliver, and may

we know the sweet comfort that they that are for us are more than they that be against us. "Lord, open our eyes, that we may see."

"My bark is wafted to the strand  
By breath divine;  
And on the helm there rests a hand  
Other than mine."

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## CAPTIVITY

*2 Kings xvii. 6-18.*

SOLD under sin; a slave; once God's pure child, chosen for holiness and happiness; now bound by fetters which neither remorse nor effort of the will can break; carried away captive by a force impossible to resist. This is the story of Israel's sin. This is the story of sin cherished and yielded to in the individual soul. Sin is to be feared. We dare not treat it lightly. It must be acknowledged as a real enemy to be met and conquered or it will become our conqueror. One verse tells the whole story. "The children of Israel did secretly those things that were not right against the Lord their God." One of their prophets said, "They do these things in the dark, every one in the chambers of his imagery"—that is, in his own thoughts, in his secret heart; for they

say, The Lord seeth us not ; the Lord hath forsaken the earth. God hath forgotten, He will never see it."

The loss of the sense of God is the first thread in the coil of sin.

"Thou treadest on enchanted ground,  
Perils and snares beset thee round ;  
Beware of all ; guard every part,  
But most, the traitor in thine heart."

"Once there came a timid knock at my heart's door. I took no heed at first. Again it came a little louder. I opened the door and there stood a tiny creature with the face of an angel. 'Let me in,' he said ; 'I will give you a good time.' I hesitated. Then, thinking so cherubic a being could do me no harm, I let him in. But as soon as the door was closed he began to grow, and before many months I became his slave. When too late I realized it was a trick of Satan to lure me into his kingdom."

It is so easy to form a habit which it is hard to break. Imperceptibly we change, so that things we once regarded as quite out of the range of our conduct, we do without a twinge of conscience. I speak now of things really sinful and hurtful ; not such as an enlightened conscience may come to see in a truer, more Christian view. There is a wide difference between a purged conscience and a dead or

silenced conscience. Indulgence in what we know is wrong stealthily but surely weakens and finally destroys the soul's consciousness of God. This led to Israel's captivity. This is the peril of sin. You cannot deliberately do wrong when you think of God. Could you tell a lie if you stopped to think God was listening? Could you use a profane word if you remembered that He heard? Could you be sulky, or angry, or revengeful if you stopped to think He was looking into your heart? Could you read an impure book or think impure thoughts if you considered that at that moment God knew every secret imagination? No; we are afraid or ashamed to sin when we think of Him. Our only safety is to remember always, "Thou God seest me." Remember, too, that He who sees us in the dark as in the light loves us while He hates the sin. Let us not only fear to offend Him; let us be sorry to grieve Him. Let us do nothing that will lessen our consciousness of His presence. "If you find yourself beginning to love any pleasure better than your prayers, any book better than the Bible, any place better than the house of God, any table better than the Lord's table, any person better than Christ, or any indulgence better than the hope of heaven—take alarm."

## A HEART STORY

*Jeremiah ii.*

A MAN travelling through a dreary country came upon a cabin where a family of natives lived, shiftless, ignorant, and poor. In a stone set against the broken door to keep it open he saw a tiny speck which he thought it worth while to look into. So he brought another stone from the many lying about, and asked the mistress of the cabin if she would exchange stones with him. "One's as good as another," she said, indifferently; so he carried it off to examine, and found it contained a valuable mineral which led him finally into possession of a great fortune.

So these chapters of far-off history, and these long lists of queer, hard names seem dull to you, one as good as another and none much worth reading? If you have eyes to see you will find they contain diamonds of truth sparkling in the light of God's eternal faithfulness and love. His thoughts towards Israel and Judah are His thoughts towards you and me; thoughts of good and not of evil, to bring us to an expected end. Life is not a game of chance. God has a plan; for every life an "expected" end.



Judah was a captive. By the rivers of Babylon her heart was heavy when she remembered the homeland. She could not sing the old songs in a strange country. But she could not forget. If she could forget she might be happy even in a far-away place. But memory haunted her. Never could she dash utterly from sight her own inheritance, her beautiful temple, the promise of Jehovah to make of her a great nation. The riches, learning, and glittering fascinations of Babylon could not satisfy, because God had intended her for something better. He never meant her to be a slave, but to rule over her rightful possessions, richer and more enduring than Babylon's most alluring dreams. The pain and wonder of her loss breaks the heart of the God who loved her. He cries out, "Israel a servant? he, a home-born? Why is he spoiled? Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when He led thee by the way? Oh, Jerusalem, wash thy heart from wickedness, that thou mayest be saved! How long shall thy vain thoughts lodge within thee? Thy ways and thy doings have procured these things unto thee; thy wickedness is bitter because it reacheth to thine heart."

Yes; it is a heart story. A captive, exile heart; a soul whose birthright is lost through rebellion and the worship of false gods; a



heart never at rest because God made it for better things than the world can give. It is a heart, too, that cannot forget. There is always a haunting memory of something lost.

Is yours a captive, exile heart? Or are you at home with God? Do you love to be where He wishes you to be? Do you take for your very own the good things He made for you, and are you living the free, happy life of a child of God, the heir of all things worth having? Oh, do come out of Babylon, and rule as you have a right to, over the inheritance God has given you. You, a servant? *You*, a home-born? By birthright an inheritor of everything your Father owns? Why are you spoiled? Who has taken your rights away? Must you forever be a captive? No. "The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; . . . the Lord hath redeemed Jacob and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he." This was the heart of God towards Judah in captivity; this is the heart of God towards you. The seventy years of exile were not years of chance happening. We are never out of God's sight, however far we wander. Cyrus was what we call a heathen, "an outsider"—but God used him to bring His exiles to their own land. He is using people and circumstances you would not

suspect to bring you into possession of what by right is yours. God is in every life, caring, guiding, controlling. He has not given up the government of this world to Satan, though that great spirit of evil would have you think so. If your faith needs a prop read the forty-fifth chapter of Isaiah.

But notice that no one in Babylon was taken back to Jerusalem by force. Only those went whose spirits were stirred to go. It is always a matter of choice. We must ourselves ask the way to Zion with our faces thitherward, saying, "Come and let us join ourselves to the Lord in a perpetual covenant that shall not be forgotten."

"Laid on Thine altar, O my Lord divine !  
Accept this gift to-day, for Jesus' sake.  
I have no jewels to adorn Thy shrine,  
Nor any world-famed sacrifice to make ;  
But here I bring, within my trembling hand,  
This will of mine—a thing that seemeth small :  
And Thou alone, O Lord, canst understand  
How, when I yield Thee this, I yield mine all.  
Hidden therein Thy searching gaze canst see  
Struggles of passion, visions of delight,  
All that I have, or am, or fain would be—  
Deep loves, fond hopes, and longings infinite."

## A WELL-PLANNED JOURNEY

*Ezra viii. 21-32.*

THE lessons of Ezra's going from Babylon to Jerusalem are so practical I am sure we will be glad to take this journey with him. We may learn much from a travelling companion. Ezra was a good traveller. He knew how to prepare for a journey and how to take it with comfort and safety. The hints he gives us are useful for any undertaking we may have in view, and especially for the life-journey we all must take.

In the first place, Ezra recognized that the journey was a plan of God, that God had thought of it and prepared the way before it ever came into his own mind at all. True, King Artaxerxes sent forth the decree and arranged the expedition, but Ezra saw God behind the human means and circumstances. He gratefully said, "Blessed be the Lord God who has put such a thing as this into the king's heart," and said, too, that he was strengthened for what he had to do, as the hand of God was upon him. This is the true view of your life and of mine. It is God's thought for us; it is not a happening, it is a plan; it has a purpose; the human conditions that seem to direct it,

against which we often rebel, are not outside of His care or control. What a difference it makes when we clearly recognize this. We are, indeed, strengthened according to the measure of our belief that the hand of God is upon us. Out of this recognition of God naturally grow the three characteristics which distinguished Ezra. He prepared his heart to seek the law of his God, to do it, and to teach it. This is the sum of successful and happy living. You are quite mistaken if you think this is only a bit of religious sentiment. It is sound good sense. What can be more sensible than for a young person to ask when starting out in life, "What is God's will for me?" Who knows so well as He who gave you your abilities of mind and body how and where you can best use them? Who but He sees all the path before you and its final outcome? Who more than the heavenly Father loves you and desires the best things for you? Who controls your life? Is it not God? We have such strange, wrong views of the will of God. We think it has nothing to do with business or pleasure or the choice of our life-work. We put it into a little narrow circle of religious duty and experience, when it should include every possible interest of our life. When shall we ever learn that the will of God, which is the love of God, covers all that concerns us, as mother love cov-

ers all that concerns her child? Only God's will, God's love, is wise and strong and tender where even mother love would fail. If we knew God better we would wish above all things to know His will. But because we misunderstand Him we are afraid of Him. Ezra prepared his heart to find out God's will, and *do* it. I cannot say this is always easy. At least it is not easy until we have come to know God as a child knows a very good and loving father.

I know it often costs a battle with our own will before we consent to do duty that is made quite plain. All sorts of obstacles, opposition, and the bent of our personal choice make it hard to do the thing which providential circumstances and inward conviction show us is "the law of our God" for us. But although I cannot say it is easy, I do say, with emphasis, that it is always best to do God's will, and that nothing else will end for us either happily or successfully. There are many "wrecks on the shores of time" because this chart and compass—His law and His love—have been cast aside by the voyager. God has something to say about human conduct. He is the Ruler of men. However independent we may wish to be, we dare not forget that every soul must give account to Him.

It is not enough to know and do the will of

God: we must teach others what we have ourselves learned. "No man liveth to himself." Scientists tell us the universe is so made that each atom influences another. You cannot move a flower, it is said, without disturbing a star. I do not know the facts of science in nature, but I do know the facts of personal influence in human lives. And I know that a good, true life that recognizes God in everything and reverently seeks to know and do His will is a "lamp giving light to all that are in the house." There is one very especial thing we must not overlook in Ezra's preparation for his journey: He prayed before he started. He took time, as he says, to "seek of God a right way for us, and for our little ones and for all our substance." He was an Old Testament saint, but he prayed a New Testament prayer. In "everything" he made his requests known unto God. A right way for the grown-up people, who might be inclined to depend too much upon their own good sense and judgment in the affairs of this important journey; a right way for the little ones, who were starting out without any knowledge of their own; a right way for the management of all their earthly possessions. I am sure he set out upon the road over the desert with a calmness and confidence he could not have felt had he not taken that quiet time to talk with God. Do you really know, for yourself, the blessed-



ness in seeking of God "a right way" at the beginning of each day; before every undertaking; before every journey; for the grown-up people, who are your fellow pilgrims; for the little children, who need your help over the hard places; and for the use of your money and all other possessions?

Ezra's conduct was consistent with his prayer. He was ashamed to ask the king to take care of him after he had committed his affairs to God and had told the king that he trusted God. Artaxerxes no doubt would have given him the band of soldiers to protect him from the enemy in the way, but he would have said to himself, "This man does not quite believe all he says about his God; He probably is no better than the gods we worship in Babylon." I am afraid the world has occasion to say so of us and of our God. We say we commit our way to Him; that we trust Him, and we sing, with great fervor, "He leadeth me, oh, blessed thought, oh, words with heavenly comfort fraught!" and then go about with no heavenly comfort in our faces or in our hearts. No wonder the world doubts our sincerity and is not won to love and trust our God. Let us consider well the lessons of this wisely planned journey from Babylon to Jerusalem.



## PRAYER AND SERVICE

*Nehemiah i. 1-11; ii.*

NEHEMIAH knew the source of power. He saw the unseen. He held the secret of great accomplishment. He believed that things which are impossible with men are possible with God. He recognized a force behind the Persian throne. God was real to him. He was accustomed to pour out his heart to Him. He relied upon prayer not as an exercise profitable for his own soul, but as a means to bring to pass things which he greatly desired. He used it in a sincere, simple way, as a matter of course, the habit of his life, expecting God would hear and answer, and, according to a spiritual law which we cannot understand, also according to human experience through all ages, he proved that "the effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much."

We cannot explain how one can talk with another over the telephone hundreds of miles away, nor the greater wonder that we can communicate without any visible medium, but we accept the fact without the explanation, and get the benefit of it. God has always known these possibilities; the underlying natural laws have never been secret or strange to Him. Man is

just beginning to find them out. God knows there is a spiritual law which connects the prayer of a sincere soul with its answer. And because this is so vital to our well-being He has not left us to await the slow discoveries of the ages before we can make use of it, but has revealed it in His word. We are not told how prayer affects our lives, or how it affects the mind of God; but we believe that it does because God says so. Perhaps one of the delights of heaven will be the revelation to us of those secret laws whose working we now accept and use only by faith. God says: "Call upon Me, and I will answer;" "Ask, and ye shall receive;" "If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God;" "What things ye desire when ye pray believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them." The Bible is full of exhortations, promises, and illustrations concerning prayer. We say we believe in it, but I doubt if we have tested fully its power in the affairs of every day. The prayer of Nehemiah is a golden key with which to unlock the door of each new morning. "Prosper, I pray thee, Thy servant this day;" and then as each emergency comes along if, as he did, we lift our heart to the God of heaven, the guidance, the wisdom, the prospering, are given according to the need.

May we pray about everything? Yes, "in

everything by prayer and supplication let your requests be made known unto God." But be careful of the spirit in which you pray. God is pleased only with unselfish and sincere requests. Sometimes this experience is spoken of in a very irreverent way. I have heard one say to another, laughing as she said it, "Pray that it may not rain and spoil all our fun," or, "Pray that I may get that thing I want so much." The least thing that affects our happiness or comfort our Father in heaven cares for. He notices the fall of a sparrow, and numbers the hairs of our head. But we must speak to Him reverently, sincerely, unselfishly, not wanting our own way.



## REBUILDING

*Nehemiah iv.*

THE study of Nehemiah's building project is stimulating. It is full of practical suggestion for anything you or I may have to do this very week. The foundation of this man's character was his religious faith. He recognized God in social, personal, and business affairs, and sought His guidance and blessing by prayer. This was one evidence of the sound good sense which made him a successful, practical business man.

He says he prospered according to the good hand of God upon him. From this point of view every honorable calling in life is stimulating, fascinating. Even the drudgery of housework or the monotony of the factory is lightened and brightened if we do it for God and with God. It is fretting, wearing, and wearisome without Him. There is sound sense in the religious faith that seeks the strength and comfort of His "good hand" in all we have to do.

Enthusiasm and good sense both are necessary to success in any undertaking. They are not always found together; if one cannot possess both I think good sense is most to be desired. But God has made it possible for us to have both through the Holy Spirit given to all who ask. He is the Spirit of love, of power, and of a sound mind. A sound mind trusts God, believes in His guidance, relies upon Him for help, and also uses every material aid, every faculty of judgment, reason, prudence, to carry out plans in all lines of life. Nehemiah depended upon God for wisdom in speaking to the king; then, with a sure belief that God was leading him he took letters of introduction to the people of influence along the way, and an escort of soldiers for protection. He trusted God as though there were no earthly resources, and he used earthly resources as though there

were no God to trust. Or, perhaps we might better say he considered earthly resources as God's means for carrying out His plans. This is the true combination of enthusiasm and common sense; very desirable in secular business, and even more so in religion, in missionary enterprise, and every service pertaining to our own salvation and the salvation of others.

The rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls has great significance. In spiritual things we have the same sort of work and the same difficulties. Let us see how this sensible enthusiast, Nehemiah, accomplished his mission. To begin with, he listened to tidings brought from Jerusalem by some of his brethren; then he went to investigate for himself. We act energetically when we get a clear understanding of a matter through looking into it personally. Having seen the real conditions and the pressing need on that midnight ride around the fallen walls, a deep enthusiasm was kindled, and other souls took fire from the soul of one man thrilled by what he had seen. He moved the people to the work by telling them what he knew; by showing them what a reproach it was to God and to themselves to have the chosen city so disgraced; by the assurance that it was God's own cause and He would prosper it, and by the fact that the king of Persia would assist the enterprise. By every argument, fired with the en-

thusiasm which came from his faith in God, he stirred the people until they said, "Let us arise and build," and they strengthened their hands for the work.

Oh, how we need such leaders now!—leaders who know, because they have heard or read or seen the world's need of Christ; who have the divine enthusiasm of faith; who can kindle other souls by the fire of love, courage, and zeal burning in their own. There are great gaps in the broken walls through which men and women are falling into hopeless depths of sin and sorrow because like the nobles of Tekoa so many refuse to "put their necks to the work"—too proud or too indolent to care. Perhaps you have passed over the list of names in Nehemiah's account of the building. But the Holy Spirit uses every detail for a purpose. Each person had his own work to do; the daughters had their part; God has always given women an important place in spiritual building; names are mentioned because *every one's* work will be tried, of what sort it is; at the last the Master will say not to classes, or churches, or families, but to each person, "Thou good and faithful," or, "Thou wicked and slothful servant."

We are well acquainted with Sanballat, Tobiah, Arabians, Ammonites, Ashdodites. Their tactics are the same as ever. They say of foreign missions, "You may as well try to



empty the ocean with a teaspoon." They say of Christians, "Oh, it won't last; even a little fox of temptation could overturn their faith;" and when they see one really prospering in spiritual building they say, "Come over and be friendly; really we can be of advantage to you if you are not so exclusive." Three things saved Nehemiah from the open attacks and specious wiles of his foes—clear moral perceptions, firm courage, unwavering decision. All these he gained by acknowledging the hand of God upon him, and by taking everything to Him in honest, earnest prayer.

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## YOUR KINGDOM

### *The Book of Esther*

WE must read the entire Book of Esther in order to get the spiritual teaching of which it is so full. There is more in the story than is written. It is a "song without words" that will sing in your heart, if you learn and listen, God's precious and inspiring truth. It teaches the power of personal influence; how God uses individuals, and overrules circumstances to work out the designs of His providence and His government, although those whom He so



uses may be quite unaware of the part they have to do. It teaches that a single impulsive word or act discloses character, and may turn events to affect the good or ill of many persons, yes, even of nations. Vashti little thought her high-spirited refusal to obey the whim of Ahasuerus was closely connected with the salvation of the Jews throughout Persia. A word or act of yours may have an influence of which you do not dream. Let us be careful. This story illustrates the meanness of envy and covetousness. How soon these passions grew to hatred and murder in Haman's heart! Is there any one for whose good fortune you are not glad? Any one towards whom you feel resentment or ill-will? Envy and jealousy are demons of destruction. They are to be feared. Let us get them out of our hearts quickly! Haman seems a very hateful person as we read of him here, but I am afraid his spirit is not unknown among our own acquaintances—perhaps including ourselves.

This story teaches, too, that every endowment we have of mind or body may be used in doing good. Esther's personal beauty first won the heart of the king and made it possible for her to be used by God in His purposes for His people. "Beauty is vain" if it makes one proud or selfish, but taken simply and gratefully as the good gifts of God, all personal charms and accom-

plishments are to be prized for the use we can make of them in the Lord's service.

But beauty of character is better than beauty of person. There were many fair maidens in the palace of Shushan, but there was something in Esther different from the rest. She was not only admired, but she "pleased" the king, and the king's servants, and "all them that looked upon her." We are not told why, but we can guess from those characteristics of true womanhood suggested by her conduct. Esther accepted what was given as her portion with dignified contentment, not with the restless, selfish spirit of the others who demanded all they could possibly get. She seems to have had the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price—a spirit which needs to be cultivated in the unduly aspiring, self-seeking, overambitious fever of society. This quiet mind is not a sign of weakness, but of force. In every act of this charming young woman we see the self-forgetful, courageous, tactful, patient spirit which belongs to strong character. It is a stimulating and instructive study.

There is much in this old Oriental story strange to our thought in this modern Western world. Some details possibly are true to present facts in Eastern households; but we would scarcely go there for instruction in high think-

ing and living. But in the midst of Ahasuerus's voluptuous, drunken, disgraceful court Esther shines like a star in the rift of a black cloud. She illustrates what a woman may do when her gifts are devoted to noble, unselfish purpose. One thing which is fundamental in all true character is said of her: She was teachable and obedient. A little orphan girl, she came to live with her cousin, Mordecai. She was a sweet, obedient child, and when grown to womanhood, in the very different life of the king's household she "did the commandment of Mordecai like as when she was brought up with him." This is not the prevailing habit of girls, is it? Too often they are noisy, self-assertive, careless of advice, and disobedient; and away from home influence they drift from early teaching. Really, this picture of Esther is beautiful to see in the gallery of girlhood, which affords too many contrasts. One like her can be trusted anywhere, at any time; and society needs such antiseptic bits of salt.

An obedient heart is good soil for the roots of conscientiousness and duty. The girl accustomed to obedience grew to the woman ready to meet serious responsibility. Accustomed not to put her own will and her own ease first, she was able to set herself utterly aside to serve others. This sweet self-forgetfulness is shown in one little touch in this picture. It was the

custom to give every maiden whatever she desired, when she was called to go to the king's house. When Esther was called she required nothing but what the king's chamberlain had appointed. She possessed that quiet contentment which marks high breeding, so refreshing to see in contrast with the vulgar effort to get everything for one's self; the clamorous wish to "have things because other girls have them." Of all the feasts in Ahasuerus's court Esther had the best, for "a contented mind is a continual feast." Her sweet temper won her the favor of all who looked upon her. Esther's beauty was part of her equipment for the salvation of her people. She was fair in her royal robes standing in the court, and because the king admired her he held out to her the golden sceptre. There are two ways of serving God. He calls some of us to give up earthly possessions and follow Him in the renunciation of all that allures one's taste and preference; others He calls to serve Him in the use of these gifts. The thing of real importance is to be ready to lose all or to use all as He may choose. Only let us not forget that every gift of mind or body or possession is an opportunity to glorify not the gift, but the Giver.

There came a crisis, a great test of this young woman's fibre. Her own people were threat-

ened with destruction ; she was providentially in the place to save them. She did not know the facts until Mordecai told her ; but she heard them with a listening and obedient heart. Two considerations moved her. She was in the place where she was for this very purpose ; if she did not use the opportunity she would herself suffer loss. It was not an easy thing she was asked to do. Her own courage was not sufficient. But for days with her maidens, and Mordecai outside the palace, she fasted—which means she waited upon God for strength and guidance. Then with fine self-abandonment she said, “ I will brave the anger of the king, and if I perish, I perish.”

Many a young woman, conscientious and true, is now answering the call of duty in the same spirit of self-forgetfulness. But I wish my voice might reach the girls of all this land. You who have culture, wealth, beauty, social influence, do you not know you have come to your kingdom for the present crisis of the world's need ? Your youth itself is a gift to be used, and it will so soon be gone ! Everything is given you to share with others who have less. Your gifts are your opportunity ; if not used, you will suffer loss in your own character and in the last reckoning, when the Lord shall say, “ Give an account of thy stewardship.” Your present position, whatever it is,

is your opportunity; your possessions, whatever they are, are your means of service. Your kingdom is just where God has put you, and all He wants to carry out His plan to save the world is *you*, whatever you have or have not.

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## MY DWELLING PLACE

*Psalm xci.*

ON the dreary desert march the Holy Spirit inspired Moses to cry, "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations." From the fretting crowd, from the unsettled wilderness life, how blessed to turn and look beyond the steadfast stars into the unchanging heavens, into the face of God! So the Spirit, the blessed Comforter, calls us, in the midst of change and weariness, to the same sure place of rest. Happy are we if we have found our home in God. A dwelling place—somewhere to stay and not feel that our belongings must be disturbed and every dear association pulled up by the roots—what a comfort for homeless people that such a thing exists! St. Paul counted having "no certain dwelling place" among his trials; and a trial it is indeed unless we have learned St. Paul's secret of being content wherever we are.



We may find what we call a home outside of God, but never one that will be permanent. Some happening breaks it up sooner or later. I can shut my eyes and see every corner of my childhood's sweet home—where the chairs stood, and the old tall clock with its solemn tick, and where father and mother sat when we gathered round the evening lamp to read and talk and sew. I can see every bush in the garden and the silver band of the river encircling the fields. It was home indeed, for love was there; but it is only a memory now. There have been other homes full of comfort, of cheer, and of love, but they are gone; and if any one of them were still mine it would not be the same because all who made it sweet and dear have gone somewhere else to live. So it is that every heart that beats is sooner or later homeless unless the Lord is its dwelling place. If He is we can sing with Madame Guyon :

‘ I can be calm and free from care  
On any shore, since God is there.’

I want you to know the blessedness of living at home in God. What changes may come no one can tell. But at home, in God, overturnings affect only outside things. The real home life of fellowship, food, and rest goes on, whatever comes. I want you to find this home



while you are young, so that you may have a long life in Him. There are people who have lived so long in one place that they seem a part of the house itself, and the house a part of them; you never think of one without the other. There are persons who have dwelt in God so many years that we could not think of them without thinking of Him in whom they dwell.

How shall you begin this home-making? Many Bible sayings tell us; but I think this one will make it easy and plain: "He that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him." All His commandments are included in these: to believe, to obey, to love, to abide. Believing, you will start on the way home; obeying, you will find the open door and the Father's welcome; loving, you will share the shelter, peace, and plenty of the Father's house; abiding, you will go no more out forever, and whatever you ask it shall be done for you. So safe, so content, so rich, is the soul that dwells in God.

**"Then stay at home, my heart;  
Home-keeping hearts are happiest."**

## SONGS

*Psalms cxxiv., cxxv., cxxvi.*

THESE psalms are a symphony of praise and thanksgiving. They are like the voice of the birds just before sunrise. They call one to another and to us, "Wake up, wake up and sing!"

Is the spiritual building progressing in your heart? Have you been brought out from the captivity of sin? Then do not forget to give thanks and sing praises. A happy Christian honors God. A doleful, weeping soul, always sighing over shortcomings and tribulations, does not glorify the Lord who has redeemed us, nor recommend His salvation. "When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion . . . then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The Lord hath done great things for them."

How can the world say that of us if we do not show that we are rejoicing victors over sin, sorrow, disappointment, and all the trials, great or small, that come to us? If we have no songs of deliverance to sing, they find in us nothing different to themselves. Why should they care for a faith which fails to give us the

happiness they are vainly seeking in the world? But if in our faces, words, conduct, and experience we say, "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad," then we honor our Deliverer and recommend His grace. Every Christian should be a "sagacious optimist." He should not be blind to his own failures nor to the sad condition of a deceived and sinful world. But he should never lose sight of the light in the darkness, for there is never hopeless night since Jesus came into the world to save sinners. He is the Light; he that followeth Him shall not walk in darkness.

Babylon is the place to weep and hang one's harp upon the willows. Poor exiles! I do not see how they can be anything but sorrowful in the world without God and without hope. But those who have come back to their inheritance as children of God ought to be so glad and thankful that it makes others happy just to see them! There are many such Christians, but there should be more. Instead of depressing others with our burdens and sorrows, we should be so "compassed about with songs of deliverance" that our very atmosphere would inspire with hope and courage.

It is a Christian's business to keep in good heart all who are sad or discouraged. "I feel better every time I look at you," said one

invalid to another. "I'm sure I do not know why you should," the other said with a cheerful laugh, looking at her distorted, crippled hands. "Oh, well, crippled hands are nothing when the soul's wings are free," her friend replied.

Let us not talk of failure; let us sing songs of deliverance. Read the thirty-first chapter of Jeremiah. It is the song of a "sagacious optimist," who sees the sure triumph of good over evil and of joy over sorrow. "For the Lord hath redeemed Jacob, and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he. Therefore shall they come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow together to the goodness of the Lord . . . and My people shall be satisfied with My goodness, saith the Lord."

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## THE WONDERFUL NAME

*Isaiah ix. 1-7.*

NEVERTHELESS is a great word. Many times in the Bible it stretches over some torrent of thought like a bridge spanning a river. No chastening for the present seemeth joyous, but grievous; *nevertheless* afterwards it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness. I am crucified, *nevertheless* I live. In Isaiah's

vision over what a chasm this word reaches! From calamity and darkness to peace and light. There is sorrow, confusion, oppression, war; *nevertheless*, there shall be joy, restitution, order, quietness, because the Light of the world has come. It is hard to understand the prophet until he speaks of Jesus; then we know the force of that great word "nevertheless." Life, providence, sorrow, death, the past, present, future, are "dimness," wrapped in mystery, until we who walk in the darkness see a great light in His face; the shadow of death is over all until eternal life in Jesus Christ shines upon us. His name, His character, Himself, is the *Nevertheless* bridging the chasm between lost humanity and the God of loving kindness and mercy.

" We would see Jesus, the great Rock Foundation  
Whereon our feet are set with sov'reign grace.  
Not life nor death with all their agitation  
Can thence remove us if we see His face."

Who is He? Let us seek Him in His Word that we may find Him in our hearts. Nineteen hundred years ago He was born in Bethlehem, a human child, our brother, in sympathy with us in every experience of life. But our apprehension of Him is very unworthy His exalted character if we think of Him only as a perfect human ideal. Our thought has a limited hori-

zon if we see Him first in the light of the star of Bethlehem. He was in the beginning with God; He was God; He is the Creator of all things; without Him was not anything made that is made. He came from heaven to talk with Abraham at his tent door. He was the Angel who redeemed Jacob from all evil. He spoke to Moses from the burning bush. He was Jehovah, the I Am, the revelation of God as He is. He was the Angel who went before the people in the wilderness, whose presence rested the perplexed and burdened heart of Moses. It was He who hid Moses in the cleft of the rock and caused all his goodness to pass before him; the Jehovah-Jesus to whom we pray,

“ Rock of ages, cleft for me,  
Let me hide myself in Thee.”

It was He who proclaimed Himself the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin, and by no means clearing the guilty. He could not forgive sin and at the same time clear the guilty without Calvary; and so I read our Golden Text between the lines of that revelation to Moses, “Thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins.” I clasp the warm hu-



man hand of Jesus and feel the strong, vibrant thrill of the power of Jehovah. His name is Wonderful. The prophet does not say these names should be given Him, but that these names represent what He really is, as we say we call a person kind or good because he *is* kind and good. He is Wonderful; the angels are peering into the mystery of His life and death. He is our Counsellor; in Him are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. His sheep, His stupid sheep, know His voice and follow Him. He is the Mighty God; even the winds and the sea obey Him. He plants His footsteps in the sea and rides upon the storm. He is the Everlasting Father; His goings forth are from eternity.

“ From everlasting Thou art God,  
To endless years the same.”

He is the Prince of Peace. Being justified by faith in Him, we have peace with God. Peace I give unto you; let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. He gives peace among the warring nations; peace in the troubled heart.

Peace, perfect peace, the future all unknown,  
Jesus we know, and He is on the throne.”

The highest names fade as time goes on; the name and the character of Jesus attract the



world's thought more and more each century. Of the increase of His government there shall be no end. It is a pity for all who are slow of heart to see and believe what He is doing among the nations now. His reign and His power are spiritual. "No laws nor wars nor arts effect the changes in human thought or practice while the silent, unseen force of the Spirit of Jesus is working throughout the earth." To Him every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

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## UTTERMOST FOLLY

*Jer. xxxvi.*

JEHOIAKIM began to reign when he was nine years older than Josiah was when he set his heart to seek the Lord. Jehoiakim set his heart to seek himself. He was thoroughly selfish. He wished no man and no book to interfere with his own pursuits. His country was in dire distress; his brother was an exile in Egypt; and yet his whole thought was upon building for himself an elegant palace where he could take his ease according to his taste. How it was built, or who suffered in the building of it, he did not care. A selfish soul is the same always, everywhere. There are Jehoia-

kims among our acquaintances to-day. Jeremiah says of them all: "Woe unto him that buildeth his house by unrighteousness, and his chambers by wrong; that useth his neighbor's service without wages, and giveth him not his hire; that saith, I will build me a wide house and spacious chambers, and cutteth him out windows; and it is ceiled with cedar, and painted with vermilion. Shalt thou reign, because thou closest thyself with cedar? Did not thy father eat and drink, and do justice and judgment, and then it was well with him? He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him. Was not this to know Me? saith the Lord. But thine heart and thine eyes are but for thy covetousness, and to shed innocent blood, and for oppression and violence. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah: They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah my brother!" For Josiah, who read the Word of God to obey it, all the kingdom mourned and showed him every honor when he died. Jehoiakim, who read the Word to despise and destroy it, had, it is said, "the burial of an ass."

It was early autumn. The day was chilly with approaching frost. The wind sighed a prophecy of coming disaster. But what cared this young fellow faring sumptuously in his winter chamber, seated before the fire glowing

upon the hearth? Winds might blow on the unsheltered poor; Babylon might blight the nation; he was comfortable and that was enough.

Jehudi enters where the king and princes are conversing, bringing the scroll Baruch has written at the prophet's dictation. He reads only three or four leaves, when the king seizes it from his hand, cuts it in pieces with the scribe's knife at his girdle, and throws it in the fire to burn to ashes. It is God's message, quick and powerful, piercing even to the dividing of the joints and marrow, a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. No wonder Jehoiakim could not endure it. It disturbed his ease; it foretold retribution; he would not listen, he would not believe it as a message from Jehovah. Foolish youth! his cutting and burning were of no consequence except to himself. The Word of the Lord abideth forever, whatever men think or do. The roll was rewritten with many added words from God, and every word concerning the king and his nation was fulfilled to the letter.

This is not an old-time story so out of date that we read it only as a tale that is told. It is repeated day after day. The living Word pierces to the thoughts and intents of the heart, so that selfish, ease-loving men and women do not love to read it. They cut it out here and

there; they say, "It does not mean just that," or they throw it away with indifference or resentment. But not one jot or tittle shall pass until all is fulfilled. Is it not wiser to study it with an obedient heart to know our duty and God's will for us, rather than to find by and by that we have taken the wrong road because we have not had with us the lamp for our feet and the light on our path? The things we do not understand we may wisely and patiently wait to know as the Spirit opens them to our minds. Some things that are written we shall know only "in part" until we read them in the perfect light of heaven. But even these mysteries when believed in simple faith bring joy to the heart. Little children accept with complaisant assurance many sayings of father or mother which they do not comprehend or understand. It is sweet to read the Bible with the open heart of a child, and blessed too to study it with the open mind of a devout scholar. As one has said: "The Old Testament Scriptures present examples of faith and conduct, of character and principle, in varied circumstances of life which we may adopt as our models and strive to emulate. They lift us into an atmosphere of religious thought and feeling which is the highest man has ever reached except in the New Testament. All these great themes are set forth with a classic beauty and felicity of diction and

with a choice variety of literary form which are no unimportant factors in the secret of their power over mankind." It is given by inspiration of God for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness, and its promises shine like stars in the night. Read it, believe it, love it. "When thou goest it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest it shall talk with thee; for the commandment is a lamp and the law is light."

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## OPEN WINDOWS

*Daniel vi. 1-23.*

WHAT a refreshing breath of Christian courage! If Daniel had this courage, so may I. Let me get something now from this old servant of God. No man liveth unto himself. Daniel did not know that what he was doing in his house in Babylon twenty-five hundred years ago would be like a visit of good cheer from my next-door neighbor to me here in America—a country he never knew existed. The circles of influence are wide. If I can be helped by Daniel, perhaps I may help some one far away whom I do not know.

He was not young when this great test of faith and principle came to him. Age weakens

a man's nerve. A den of lions was enough to take the spirit out of a heart eighty years old. But one who waits upon the Lord for eighty years renews his strength. Daniel began to trust God when he was a boy, when he decided to brave the king's anger and eat no meat and drink no wine from the king's table. Eighty faithful years made him very sure of his God. When he knew the writing was signed he went into his house and, his windows being open in his chamber towards Jerusalem, kneeled upon his knees three times a day and prayed and gave thanks before his God as he did aforetime. Blessed old man! What a lesson for me! He knew the thing was settled; nothing could change the decree. The den of lions was an awful thing indeed, but nothing could make the circumstances different. It was an accepted trial. He did not ask God to change anything; he saw that it had to be just as it was. What then? Doubt, worry, fear, distrust? Oh, no. "The storm swept o'er the upper ocean, but naught disturbed the quiet of the deeper sea." See the calmness of that soul, because he believed in his God. He not only kneeled to pray, but he gave thanks before his God just as if he had never heard of a lion's den. I wonder what he gave thanks for. I suppose for the many times he had been helped over hard places in the eighty years gone by; thanks



for a quiet hour to talk with God; and thanks for one more opportunity to prove his loyalty to Him. He was so occupied with the vision of Jerusalem from those open windows—Jerusalem far out of sight yet so real to the devout worshipper—that he forgot all about the lions.

It would not have been quite so if Daniel had gone away to pray because of this emergency. He was used to praying. He did not open his windows for that occasion. They were already open. I suppose they were never shut. He had done this three times a day "aforetime." It was his habit, and he seems to have been in such sweet communion with God that he forgot to mention the lions. It was not necessary. All he needed was to get so near that he was sure the everlasting arms were around him. God knew about the lions; He intended His servant should go through that singular experience; but He intended, too, to bring him through it so victoriously that Daniel would be glad to all eternity that he had such a chance to prove what a great and good God was his.

I have read these beautiful words about open windows: "A man whose earthly life had reached its twilight, sitting in the quiet of a summer evening, looking out upon the landscape mellow in the sunset afterglow, said: 'The soul has its windows as well as our own houses. If we would lift the curtain on the



heavenward side we should know better how to live and have less dread of death. We see too much of the present and too little of the future. To lean on the window sill and look into the busy throng is pleasant, for God has offered us many opportunities for work; but to lift the windows on the other side and give the winds that blow from heaven free course through the house is a great comfort, a refreshment, a consolation. There are angels round about us, but we do not see that they are there. We need their kind offices, but the windows are closed and they cannot enter.' ”

We need the open air, we need the cheering outlook. People are sick and languid from want of fresh air in the house. The soul faints from want of open windows. The windows of faith, hope, love—how hard they are to open because we keep them so much closed. These are the windows on the Jerusalem side. The air that comes that way is a tonic to make us strong for trial; the prospect makes one forget the trial just at hand. There is the window of memory too. We say sometimes it is a depressing view from that window. But not when the light of God's mercy and care shines over it. When he was in trouble David said, “I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.” Hope for the present comes with the memory of God's goodness in the past.

Let us draw a line in our Bibles around the words "his windows being open." Daniel would have had no heart to open them with his old, trembling hands when he knew there was a plot against his life. He would have sat down in the dark to brood over his sorrows. But when he came into that room where he talked with God every day every window was wide open.

Keep the soul-windows open—Faith, Hope, Love, Memory, Thankfulness. Trials must befall us; they are a part of all human experience. But no manner of hurt is found upon us when we have a clear, constant look Godward.

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## WEIGHED AND WANTING

*Daniel v.*

IT was a Salvation Army girl singing. The tones were tender, and the words went to my heart. I often pray as I pass them kneeling in the dust of the street that the Holy Spirit may use what they say to arrest the thought of some one going by. These were the words she sang :

“ Weighed in the balance, and wanting ;  
Weighed, but no Jesus is there :  
Weighed in the balance, and wanting,  
Weighed, and found lighter than air ! ”

I thought what if I were weighed to-day? Would my real self balance true? A precious price has been paid for me, am I giving to God the full value of what He has given for me? Then indeed was I glad to remember, "Christ Jesus is made unto us wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption," and I need not fear to be weighed even in God's just balance if Jesus is on my side of the scale. I went on my way singing in my heart :

"To me with His dear name are given  
Pardon, and holiness, and heaven."

Belshazzar's father had learned by a terrible experience the folly of a heart lifted in pride against God. While he was on the top of prosperity, saying, "Is not this great Babylon that I have built?" he lost his mind, became an imbecile, and for years was an object of pity and scorn in the eyes of the people he had ruled with the hand of a despot. All this he suffered to learn that God, not man with his proud self-will, rules in the kingdom of men. How hard we make it for ourselves when we set up self in the place of God. Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness, but the road by which we find wisdom is often necessarily rough. Belshazzar, though he knew all this about his father, learned only by the same way of hard experience that God holds every human

life in the grasp of almighty power. Will you not learn this truth with a meek and quiet spirit? His grasp of power is a hand of love. It is a wise and happy thing to submit one's life to His control. It is terrible to learn submission by defeat. But it seems the only way for many of us.

Daniel did not set before Belshazzar a list of crimes as the reason for the mysterious writing on the wall against him. Only one charge he made, and that included all. "Thou hast not humbled thine heart, . . . but hast lifted up thyself against the Lord of heaven; . . . and the God in whose hand thy breath is, and whose are all thy ways, hast thou not glorified."

Is this charge against Belshazzar only? What of me? What of you? The balances are God's justice. On one side is His holiness, righteousness, mercy, and love; on the other side, you. Not what you have done or not done in specific acts, but your character, yourself. How does it weigh? What can you put in the scale against His holiness? Ah, that sinful heart—it cannot tip the scale one hair's weight! What against His righteousness, the integrity and truth by which He gives to every soul exactly what it deserves, dealing justly with all without respect of persons. Can you balance His righteousness with your own? What can you put against the mercy that has

forgiven, shielded, held back just punishment for sin, and given you grace and hope of salvation? And His love—love that suffered for you, died for you, bears with you, cares for you, never fails you; love beyond the strongest, sweetest human love you ever knew—unselfish, redeeming love! How can you even the balance weighted with all the mercies and the love of God?

The best of us are found wanting. Christ in us is our only hope. "Ye are complete in Him." The balances swing even with Christ in the scale on our side, "blotting out the handwriting against us, which was contrary to us, taking it out of the way and nailing it to His cross." But without Him we shall be forever found wanting.

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## NOT BY MIGHT

*The Book of Haggai.*

THERE is new light upon the sayings of the prophets when we read them in between the lines of Hebrew history. We better understand the meaning of Zechariah and Haggai when we know them as God's messengers in the time of the return from captivity and the rebuilding of the temple. And while the history has always its spiritual teaching for us, so,

too, the prophecies bear a living message to our hearts to-day.

It is not by might nor by power that the soul temple is rebuilt. "For by grace are ye saved through faith: and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works lest any one should boast."

When the temple builders were so disheartened by their opposers that they stopped working, leaving the stones piled in disorder for their enemies to point at as a failure, the Spirit of God spoke to them through Haggai. What do you mean, he asked, saying the time has not come to build the house of the Lord? Consider what you do. Is it right to be taken up with business, pleasure, and material comfort, and be indifferent about the work the Lord brought you here to do? And when they were aroused to renewed effort and again their adversaries tried to hinder, Zechariah, moved by the same inward voice, reminded them that success depended not upon their own skill or strength, but upon the Spirit of the Lord, who commanded the work to be done. Men could not hinder what God had determined. Who art thou, oh, great mountain? Thou shalt fall before a soul filled with the might of the Lord. How much we need the prophet's vision! You need it; I need it. We are builders; we have our commission from the great Master Builder.



His design is perfect. He sees what a glorious house it will be if we follow His plan faithfully and well. In Him, the building fitly framed together grows to a holy temple, for the habitation of God through the Spirit. But there are many adversaries. The world is not a friend to grace to help us on to God. We need the prophet's vision for courage, perseverance, success. No spiritual condition or set of circumstances can be more discouraging than were these conditions of the returned exiles. But every note of the prophet's message was hope, courage, certainty. Be strong, be faithful, do your part, and the headstone will be brought out with shoutings, "Grace, grace unto it!" Because there is an unseen force working in you. It is God that worketh in you to will and to do His good pleasure; He that has begun a good work in you will perfect it; He is able to present you faultless in the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust—that is, dominated more by the seen and the natural than by the unseen and the spiritual—and so He spurs our trust by repeated assurance. "Be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the Lord, and work; for I am with you, saith the Lord of hosts. According to the word that I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt, so My Spirit remaineth



with you: fear ye not." God does not change. The Holy Spirit abides with us forever. All you know of truth the Holy Spirit teaches you.

" Every virtue we possess  
And every victory won,  
And every thought of holiness  
Are His alone."

His one purpose is to make your heart a fit dwelling-place for the holy and loving God. Why, then, be discouraged? Be strong, and work, for My Spirit remaineth with you, saith the Lord. But He says I must work. Certainly; we have our part to do. The temple-stones must not lie around in disorder. I must read God's Word; I must pray; I must serve; I must do with my might what my hands find to do. But I must do it all with the strong consciousness that it is a vain attempt without God, and a vital success, in spite of all hindrances, with Him. Do not put this up in cloudland, out of an ordinary person's reach. It is for the practical use of a teacher, mother, housekeeper, bread-winner. Everything in daily life helps or hinders spiritual temple building. A piece of work conscientiously well done puts in a stone. Temper controlled, patience kept, a loving deed done or word spoken, a trial trustfully borne, a hard lesson mastered in school, a sarcastic, disagreeable remark kept

back, all these help on the building. They are not done by your own might or power; they are all the work of the Spirit of the Lord. The way to build rapidly, and true to the plan, is simply to open your mind and heart to the Holy Spirit. He is the workman. Just you be His tool. Let Him sharpen and polish and use as He will. There is a legend of some devout monks building a shrine for worship, which as fast as they built in the daytime enemies destroyed in the night. But because they were sincere, always doing their best in spite of discouragements, one night a band of angels came and finished their work, so strong and beautiful that the enemies gave up the fight, and the wondering monks brought a thank-offering to the shrine perfect beyond anything their own hands could have built.

So will the Holy Spirit build the soul-temple, and it shall be filled with the glory of the indwelling God; and we with eternal gratitude will say, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

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## A MESSAGE FOR TO-DAY

*Amos viii., ix.*

THIS humble shepherd caring for his flocks near Bethlehem in Judea was a plain working

man with no professional training, and never was counted among the sons of the prophets. But the Spirit of God dwelt in him, so that he saw as God sees how terrible a thing sin is and what is its only remedy. Both Israel and Judah had gone far from righteousness. Let me tell you, though not exactly as you find it in your Bible, what Amos says of them: "They have despised the law of Jehovah, and have not kept His statutes. The greedy and lawless rich, sell as a slave the honest poor man for a debt of the value of a pair of shoes. They grudge the helpless and take away the living of the wretched. They break without shame the seventh commandment of the moral law. They lay themselves down on couches at their carousals, on clothes given in pledge for loans. They drink the wine extorted by unjust fines. The women, like their husbands, oppress the poor and tread down the helpless. They say, Bring us wine, that we may drink." Yet, hand in hand with this selfish, self-indulgent living, they were very religious. "Yet what is your religion?" the scathing prophet asks. "Go then to Beth-el, and sin against God in doing so; to Gilgal and add to your guilt. Bring your offerings to your unholy altars, and publish and spread far and wide your liberality in free gifts. But mark what I think of such worship," says the Lord Jehovah. "I know on

what your confidence rests: on your zeal in your worship and in your outward devotion. But I hate and despise your church festivals. I smell no sweet savor from the sacrifices of the great crowds at your feasts. Though you bring Me burnt sacrifices, I will not accept them. The thank-offerings of your fatted calves I will not look upon. Take away from before Me the noise of your hymns, chanted around your altars. Instead of these let justice flow down your streets like water, and righteousness like mighty streams. True religion, not outward, is the thing that can save you."

How the words burn into the secret soul! How hateful to God is sin and insincerity, and how surely will He punish it! Listen again to the prophet: "Woe to them who think themselves secure, great men as you proudly call yourselves; you that care nothing for Jehovah and make little of His threatened wrath. There will surely come a day, unless repentance is genuine, when there will be no plea for mercy, but only judgment without appeal."

"Right is right since God is God." His attitude towards sin does not change. What He says of the unrepentant nation He says of the unrepentant soul.

But this very sternness towards evil is proof of His infinite tenderness. Why does He hate sin? Because it hurts the child He loves. He

pleads with every one, "Oh, return to thy God. It has been thy destruction that thou hast set thyself against Me, thy help. Turn to Jehovah; say to Him, Forgive all our sin, and receive us graciously. Then I will heal thee; I will love thee freely, for My anger is turned away. I will be as the dew unto thy heart. Thou shalt grow in beauty as the lily, and in strength like Lebanon. Then will I, Jehovah, say, 'I have heard and observed thee. I shall be to thee as an evergreen tree. From Me is thy fruit found.'"

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## AN ORATORIO

*Isaiah lli.-lv., lx.*

THE prophecy of Isaiah is an oratorio of the Messiah. The music sinks and sobs in minor cadence as he warns the nation of its sin and pleads for repentance and return to God. How it rises in victorious strains as he sings of redemption and deliverance! "Awake, awake, stand up, oh, Jerusalem, which hast drunk at the hand of the Lord the cup of His fury; thou hast drunken the dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung them out. There is none to guide her among all her sons; neither is there any that taketh her by the hand of all the sons that she hath brought up. These two things are

come unto thee; who shall be sorry for thee? desolation, and destruction, and the famine, and the sword: by whom shall I comfort thee?"

"How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of Him that bringeth good things, that publisheth peace, that bringeth good tidings of good; that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth. Break forth into joy, sing together ye waste places of Jerusalem, for God hath comforted His people, He hath ransomed Jerusalem. The Lord hath made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations, and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God." It is the sighing and sobbing of captive Judah, the singing and shouting of exiles returned to their kingdom. It is the sighing and sobbing of a lost world, far from God; and the singing of a ransomed world redeemed and restored to the favor of God and the glory of His kingdom. The redemption is priceless; its cost is humiliation, suffering, death. It is complete and forever, "for the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but My kindness shall not depart from thee nor the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the Lord."

Five hundred and fifty years after the prophet's soul, swept by the Spirit of God, poured forth this sublime music, its true Interpreter



said, "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him might have everlasting life." The final strain is yet to be sung. St. John heard coming ages marching to its music: "And they sang a new song, saying, Thou art worthy to take the book and to open the seals thereof; for Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; and hast made us unto our God kings and priests, and we shall reign on the earth. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, forever and ever." Universal redemption by the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world; universal praise to the atoning Saviour wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, upon whom was the chastisement of our peace, by whose stripes we are healed.



## II

### New Testament

*God who commanded the light to shine out  
of darkness hath shined in our hearts  
to give the light of the knowledge of the  
glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*



## ADVENT

*Matthew ii. ; Luke ii. 1-20.*

WE turn a new leaf to-day, a new leaf in the old, old story.

The evening star of prophecy was setting when Malachi foretold the glory of the Sun of Righteousness that should rise with healing in His wings. Now the morning star is shining, the dayspring has come.

There are rests in music—silences that emphasize the harmony. The silence of four hundred years between Old Testament history and prophecy and New Testament fulfillment is a rest in the harmony of Revelation. The keynote of the Old Testament is lost if we do not hear through all, the music of the Gospel the prelude to the song the shepherds heard, “Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good will to men.” Who shall attune us to the song of the ages? Only the Spirit, who knows the mind of God. If this story of the shepherds finding Jesus, this story you know by heart in its details, shall be to you a new revelation as grand and wonderful as it was to those who heard the heavenly voices floating down from the listening stars, you must ask

the Holy Spirit to speak to you through the printed words.

When the angels were gone away from them into heaven the shepherds said one to another, "Let us now go even unto Bethlehem and see this thing which is come to pass which the Lord hath made known unto us." And they came with haste and found all true as the angels had said. And when they had seen it they made known abroad all that they had heard and seen. When the angels had given their message they went back into heaven. Suppose the shepherds had said one to another, "If this wonderful news is true, and not merely a vision or a dream, the angels would have stayed with us, told us more, shown us just how and where to find this Saviour who they say is born to us." Doubting, hesitating, questioning, they would never have found Jesus. But they were honest and earnest, and without delay they went to see. The Holy Spirit, who brings to our hearts to-day the good news of a Saviour, never goes away. Yet, while He waits to guide us to Jesus we doubt, hesitate, question. Oh, how dull we are not to listen to His sweet message and go with haste to see the great things the Lord has told us!

Not the shepherds only, the plain quiet people intent upon their ordinary business, but

the wise and learned, too, must go to Bethlehem to "See."

" Oh, little town of Bethlehem,  
How still we see thee lie ;  
Above thy deep and dreamless sleep  
The silent stars go by.  
Yet in thy dark streets shineth  
The everlasting Light,  
The hopes and fears of all the years  
Are met in thee to-night."

Simpletons and sages, prosperous and poor, rich and ragged, happy and hopeless—for all alike their hopes and fears meet at the manger, and the only light to guide them there is the star of faith.

"Unto you is born this day . . . a Saviour, . . . Christ the Lord." Do you hear the message in the Christmas chimes? They have no real meaning for you, you do not hear what they are saying, unless your heart responds :

" O Saviour ! My Saviour ! not cradled afar  
With Mary at Bethlehem under the star ;  
He is born in my heart, my Saviour and King,  
And that is the reason the Christmas bells ring ! "

Happy hearts and bright faces belong with this day. No one should be sad as Christmas time approaches. Let us share our joys with others who have less, that there may be a more

equal division. So the world must grow into goodness and gladness. There is enough of both for all, but some have such a large share and others so little! Here is your chance to double what you have; make some one else happy by sharing; then two instead of one may be glad and good. Not that you can give away goodness; it is an incommunicable quality, and we have none of our own to spare; but we can help others to get it by showing them by word and deed the Fountain of good. Give, give, give, is the chime of the Christmas bells. Give for love's sake as God has given you.

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## ONE LIKE OURSELVES

*Luke iv. 1-13.*

JESUS is God. God seems far away if we know Him only as the High and Holy One who "inhabiteth eternity." Men make images of wood and stone, pictures of saints, and the likeness of things they imagine are above or under the earth because the unseen God is to them vague and unreal. God is real, near, and dear to the hungry human heart when we know Him in Jesus Christ. He has been trying ever since He put the first man and woman in Eden to make us know and understand Him, and

therefore to love and trust Him. He made us at first in His own image, so that naturally we ought to understand Him as we understand people who are like us in temper, disposition, and taste. But we are so changed by sin that what was originally like God in us is now so distorted and mixed with evil that it helps but little to make us understand our Father. But Jesus, the Son of God, has come "in the likeness of sinful flesh," to be so very like us and yet so very near us that we have to shut our eyes and deliberately turn away from Him not to see in Him ourselves, our possibilities, our trials, and our relation to our Father in heaven. "In all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren." He is not ashamed to call us brothers, because He is a "partaker" of our flesh and blood. This is our human brother, Jesus, who was led, or driven, of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. This experience immediately followed the rapture of the open heavens, the Voice saying, "This is My beloved Son," the filling with the Holy Spirit, and the elation of soul the in-pouring of the divine fullness gives. The wilderness horror was no sign of His Father's displeasure. He was God's beloved Son when Satan was testing Him by his specious wiles, as when the open heaven shone over Him in Jordan. He was as sinless, too, when those



vile thoughts of selfishness and distrust were thrust into His mind as when the Father said, "In Thee I am well pleased."

This was not a sham battle. It was not an attack upon a divine being who could not be overcome by the evil one. If it had been so it would not be true that He was "tempted like as we are." There would be no help or comfort here for us who have to meet the storm in our unsheltered human weakness if Jesus had any advantage over us in this conflict with the foe. We would say, "What is this to me? It is not temptation such as besets me in actual life." But it was.

" Touched with a sympathy within,  
He knows our feeble frame ;  
He knows what sore temptations mean,  
For He hath felt the same."

He was tempted "like as we are," He was hungry, He was alone, He was conscious of His great mission in the world, but found Himself in a wilderness where there was not the slightest chance to touch another soul ; nothing here but solitary deprivation. It was a long struggle ; it lasted forty days and forty nights. Ah, the nights ! The tempter speaks in the stillness when there is no one to say a heartening word ; in the darkness when things look ghostly and mysterious ; in the long, long night

when it seems as if morning would never come. And what does he say? First, that little, great word, "If." If he can make us question God, doubt His reality, His truth, His power, His love, Satan has gained a sure point; everything else follows easily. You are hungry; you are not satisfied; you want many things Providence has not given. If you are God's child why does He not give you what you want? Take things in your own hands; try your own way; why should you patiently wait God's time when He keeps you waiting so long? Why be hungry when you might provide yourself plenty to eat? Jesus answers, "Harmony with God's will is better than bread. I will bear the hunger and trust My Father." "Well, then," says the tempter, "if you are so sure of God, put Him to the test. He is a good God. He has promised to take care of you. Do whatever you like; He will bring it out all right. Trust the good God, and live and do as pleases yourself." Jesus answers, "God has laws which must be obeyed. I must not tempt Him by reckless independence of His will. I must be obedient if I expect Him to take care of Me." "Oh, then," says the tempter, "I know you are ambitious. You hope and expect to get a place of power in this world. There are splendid chances; they are well worth your getting. I own all, and if you will put God and conscience out of your mind,

and let me have control of you, you can go high up in wealth, social place, political power, or any other part of the kingdoms of this world." Then Jesus said, "Get thee hence, Satan! One principle controls My life. I put God first and serve Him only."

Then the devil left Him; he always runs away from an inflexible will. He holds on while we vacillate; he gives up when he finds nothing will move us. He left Jesus for a season. Many times he returned, and never with more malignant force than in the shadows of Gethsemane. So he leaves us "for a season," but comes again and again up to our latest hour, and often the nearer we are to that blessed country where he dare not enter, his assaults grow more fierce and persistent. But let us put our hand in His who understands it all. He has suffered; He has conquered. It is enough for the servant that he be as his Master. Blessed is the man that endureth temptation, for when he is tried he shall receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to them that love Him. I do not know what the crown of life is, but I know it is something gloriously better than anything Satan has to offer. So let us "endure" and never yield.

## BEHOLD YOUR KING

*Luke xix. 28-48*

IN the beginning of His earthly ministry Jesus manifested His glory as the Friend of men. At Cana His identification with human interests was shown in His care for the success and pleasure of a marriage feast. Through all His sojourn, in every village, city, and in desert places, the people flocked to see and hear Him because He helped and healed and comforted them. "Never man spake as this man," they said; "even the touch of His garment has virtue in it." Such a man they had never before seen. The multitude as well as the chief priests and rulers were always wondering who He was, whence He came, and whence He had the power to do these things. He allowed Himself to be known only as the son of a carpenter; one of a large family of brothers; with only a few obscure friends, while men of influence held Him in contempt. The few evidences that He was more than He appeared to be were given only occasionally to a small circle of chosen disciples. Great and good people have been misunderstood by their contemporaries in all ages of the world, but never was one so misapprehended as was the Lord Jesus

when He lived among men. It is so even yet. His name is widely known and talked of, but how few comprehend who He is and what is His relation to humanity.

But the end was coming soon, and before the shadows of this utter ignorance should deepen into the night of Calvary Jesus permitted one foregleam of His glory to flash before their eyes. For that brief hour between Bethany and Jerusalem they paid Him homage as Conqueror and King. He was on His way to crucifixion, but the cross was His throne. "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being formed in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

There were hundreds in that crowd shouting "Hosanna" and spreading palm branches before Him in the enthusiasm of gratitude for what He had done for them. Dumb lips He

had unsealed were singing, "Blessed is the King that cometh in the name of the Lord; peace in heaven and glory in the highest." Blind eyes He had opened were gazing with delight upon the pageant in the beauty of the sunlight flashing back from the dome of the temple. No wonder He said if these should hold their peace the stones would immediately cry out; for it was a moment of prophetic inspiration, prefiguring the day when every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea and all that are in them will be heard saying, "Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever."

But, while they paid Him honor as a King, they did not understand. In a few short days this applauding multitude was dumb in the presence of His enemies. Nobody said, "Hosanna to the Son of David," when the mob cried, "Crucify Him!" They did not stand around His cross singing, "Glory in the highest." The cross was their stumbling-block. It was glorious to be a king, but kingship by way of the cross they could not understand. Were the toilsome days of Judea and Galilee fitting a king? Was the emptying of self to serve others royal living? Was the acceptance of an ignominious cross the taking of a crown? He



had tried to tell His disciples so, but they never understood it until after He was glorified—that is, until the Holy Spirit had revealed truth which the natural mind cannot receive.

Oh, beautiful teaching of this triumphal march to the holy city! May the Spirit breathe upon us as the soft winds swept over Olivet, and make the truth live in our hearts! Would we reign with Jesus? We must follow Him in the path of lowly service and loving sacrifice. How shall we do this? Only by the power of the cross He bore for us and by our full acceptance of Him as King of our hearts, of all the realm of our being.

Rejoice greatly, oh, daughter of Zion; for behold, thy King cometh unto thee, *having salvation*. Lift up your heads, oh, ye gates of my heart, and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting doors of my soul, and the King of glory shall come in.

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## A SINNER WITH JESUS

*Luke vii. 36-50.*

AS I have read this beautiful story of a sinner with Jesus, and sought to find its lesson, I have read it as if it were myself with Jesus. Not that woman long ago in the Pharisee's house, but myself, here to-day, with Jesus.



For the Word says, "If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us." "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God." Conscience says, "I have sinned," and our judgment approves the sentence when we compare ourselves with the pure and good whom we know, and, above all, with the holy Saviour. Yes; I am a sinner with Jesus; and glad I am that He receiveth sinners.

Among those who had heard His teaching, out in the crowd, unnoticed by any (except by the Lord, who overlooks no one), was a woman. Hers had been a sad life, because it was a sinful life. She was so tired of it all! She could laugh and jest and dance and sing, but it was all so hollow. Her hungry heart had not one morsel to eat. She was soul sick and starving to death. One day she heard the Lord Jesus say, "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And she heard Him say: "They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance." And out there in the crowd where nobody cared whether she, the "sinner," were happy or not, she received His message and found the rest He promised. Then a great love welled up from the depths of her soul towards Him who had redeemed her life from destruction. How could she show it?

She knew that He had gone one day to dine at a Pharisee's house. While the guests reclined at table she silently stole, uninvited, and most unwelcome to the host, to a place at Jesus' feet, bathing them with precious ointment and with the more precious tears of grateful love. The Pharisee saw only the shocking disregard of conventional rules—a sinner intruding upon respectability! Jesus saw only a heart broken with grief for sin and full of love for the Saviour. How keenly His words cut the pride of the self-righteous man! How blessedly they fell, like her own precious ointment, upon the broken spirit of the sinner, who loved much because she had much forgiven! “Simon, which of you two would love Me most? You, the proud man, who feel you have no debts to God to be forgiven; you who pride yourself on your goodness, so that you have no need of Me as your Saviour, or this woman whose sins look her in the face until she comes to Me for refuge from them? It is evident your self-righteousness begets no love. You never gave Me one token that you loved Me; this woman has proved her love by sweet humility, costly gifts, and grateful tears. I care nothing for your outside respectability, your cold-hearted attentions, and professions of friendship for Me. It is love that I want. One forgiven sinner loving much is more to Me than

all Jerusalem filled with proud and formal Pharisees." So, in effect, Jesus answered what Simon spoke "within himself." Then, with a compassionate look she would never forget, He turned to the woman, saying, "Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." Not the years nor the depth of sin, but faith and love, are the measure of forgiveness for a sinner with Jesus.

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## THE SOWER

*Matthew xiii. 24-30.*

OUR Lord Himself has given us a clear exposition of the parable of the tares. When the multitude had been sent away He taught His disciples plainly. This is the only way really to learn the deepest meaning of His word. The people who, away from the crowd, read their own Bibles, saying to Jesus, "Declare it to me; make me to see the meaning; speak to me personally through Thy word," get an understanding of spiritual truth and are not carried away by every wind of doctrine that blows from either a scholarly or a fanatical quarter. If we have ears to hear, Jesus wants us to hear. How simple and easy He made this parable for those who wanted to know. The field is the world; not one little part of it, but the whole wide

world is God's field. The good seed are good men, women and children who love and obey Him according to the light they have. "For in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of Him." He calls such people the children of the kingdom. Do not imagine the kingdom includes only your own church or country. The horizon widens when we get the Lord's point of view. There is good wheat growing everywhere, and the harvest is to be gathered from the world-field. But there are tares growing, too. An enemy has been at work. We are not left to wonder how, or why, the tares got in. It is waste of time to argue about evil as an "influence" and crime as "heredity." Jesus says the tares are people who are made wicked by the evil one, and this evil one is His personal enemy. He sees the entire field and understands what the enemy has done and knows what the outcome will be. Our own church and our own circle of acquaintance is part of the field where wheat and tares are growing together. It will save us a good deal of worriment over the tares to remember that the field is not ours, and the Owner understands the situation much better than we do. The zealous servants so concerned for the Master's property anxiously asked, "Wilt Thou that we go and gather up the tares?" "No," He said, "you might root up the wheat.

Leave the field to Me. I will dispose of the tares when the time comes." I think this plainly teaches us that we must not sit in judgment upon our fellow men, especially not upon fellow Christians.

Tares and wheat look very much alike. We may be mistaken about the real character of either. I am so glad to know God is a righteous judge. He knows who are tares and who are wheat, but He lets them grow together and does not always give us discernment to see one from the other. I think this is a good saying:

" There is so much bad in the best of us,  
There is so much good in the worst of us,  
It hardly becomes any of us  
To talk about the rest of us."

But let us remember there is a harvest. Jesus never taught there is no difference between tares and wheat, but only that we may be mistaken in our judgment of them. The day is surely coming when the harvest of the earth will be ripe and the Son of man shall send forth His angels to make the final separation. There will be no question then; no mixture of wheat and tares. There is a graphic picture of that reaping day in the fourteenth chapter of Revelation. The angels come forth with sharp sickles to gather the clusters of the vine of the earth

and cast them into the great wine-press of the wrath of God. But in the midst of the harvest shouting, a voice cries: "Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." And lo, a Lamb stands on Mount Zion and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand having His Father's name written in their foreheads, and they are without fault before the throne of God. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. No one mistakes an electric light for the sun on a bright day. The manifestation of the righteous will be clear as the sun in the sky. None will mistake it. It will be a day of surprises. Some humble, trusting child of God, who for weary years has been surrounded by godless people who tried his soul, will be surprised at his own real value in the Master's garner, and all will wonder at the grace which makes them faultless and beautiful with their Father's name shining like a star in their foreheads.

The tares that looked like wheat—ah, well! I do not want to talk about them. I only pray the dear Lord may make us each one so anxious to be pure, good grain that there can be no doubt what we are now, nor what will be our destiny in the great harvest at the end of the world.

It is a fair picture. Stretching away under



the blue sky, towards the east, lay the sea of Galilee. Often its waters reflected the face of the Master, or its tossing waves grew still at His word, or acknowledged His sovereignty as He trod above them. Jesus loved the sea. He often walked beside it, or sat near it while He talked. This time He had come from a crowded house where people pressed upon Him. The Pharisees had scornfully said He was a co-worker with Beelzebub, the prince of devils, and in holy wrath against their hardness and hypocrisy He had called them a generation of vipers. How little we realize what He suffered among such crooked and perverse people. Let all who are tried by the people they have to live with remember Jesus, and get grace for every time of need from Him, who endured "such contradiction of sinners against Himself."

I suppose He "went from the house and sat by the sea" to get a breath of fresh air and a little quiet. But the people followed Him, so while they gathered on the shore He sat in a boat, a little way apart, and taught them. He knows the weariness of tired brain and nerves. A vacation sea voyage, or seashore rest, is sweeter when we think of His companionship and sympathy.

But listen now to what He says from the boat, drawn up from the rocking waves, close



to the shore. The people were like children. They had to be taught simply ; so He told them stories, or parables. They would remember the story, and by and by when their spiritual understanding opened, the truth would unfold like a ripened nut from its shell. Even we, with the light we have, are so like children in spiritual understanding that we still are taught in parables. Life, death, sorrow, joy, all human experiences, are parables enfolding the truth of His providence, His love, His purpose towards us, we are slow to perceive. To a few it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom. Blessed are the eyes that see, and the ears that hear.

I suppose, as Jesus looked towards the Galilean fields He saw a man sowing seed, and directed the eyes of the people towards him. They were familiar with seed-sowing ; they had seen birds carry the seed away ; they knew all about barren patches, stony soil, and troublesome weeds that choked out the grain. Days, and maybe years afterwards when one crossed those fields, or saw them from his window, I doubt not the story came back to the mind and the truth flashed out of it somehow this way : "The doctrine of that wonderful Teacher was like good seed. Is my heart like the stony ground ? Have the cares of the world and the love of it taken up my thought so that His

words have been forgotten? How disappointing is the harvest of my life!"

Behold, a sower went forth to sow this morning, when the minister preached the truth; this afternoon, when the teacher tried to teach the lesson; yesterday when your mother gave you some very good advice; when some other friend tried to win you from some fault, or from the wrong way you are going. What has happened to the seed? Foolish, frivolous talking, like birds of the air, often carries away all serious thoughts the minister or teacher has put in your mind; the stony heart will not take the kind admonition; and after a while life is so full of other things the good seed is choked out, and the soul is fruitless as a desert. Good seed is plentiful. Every heart may be a beautiful garden. Keep the birds away; clear out the stones; pull up weeds by the roots, and do it now before they get ahead of you. Remember you are yourself a sower, going forth every day to sow. Let only good seed fall from your hand. Sow love; sow kindness; sow cheerfulness, courage, hope, faith. Your words and acts and influence are seeds. Wherever you go they drop along the wayside. Make the path beautiful with the seed you sow. There are tired people coming your way. Sow heartsease for them. There are people who have lost courage; sow roses of faith and trust

for them ; there are many who do not really know your Saviour ; sow for them your own heart-experience of His love. Make the desert blossom wherever you go.

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## IF THOU KNEWEST

*John iv. 5-42.*

It was noontide. The sun was hot, the road was heavy ; it was time for the midday meal, but none had been prepared. Hungry, thirsty, weary, Jesus sat upon the well. It brings Him very near to us thus to see Him sharing our conditions, knowing by experience how a tired, hungry man feels. Yet there was a hunger within Him that overcame all desire for physical food, a hunger to feed a human soul starved by sin. We love to think Jesus is like us in our human nature. He loves to see us like Him in His divine nature of loving sacrifice for others. He quite forgot pressing needs in His desire to help this woman ; we often are not willing to set aside, not our needs, but our convenience and pleasure, to do good to some one else. He was never so occupied or so weary as to be selfish. We cannot be altogether such as He was, but we can grow into His likeness day by day through little deeds of kindness and little words

of love. Watch yourself and see how selfishness grows or disappears by apparently insignificant acts and words.

The way Jesus won this woman to goodness and truth is instructive for us who wish to be soul winners. If He had begun by telling her what a sinner she was, she would have gone back to the city with a different report of her interview with Him. If you want to bring a man to the Saviour never begin by telling him of his sins. He will get on the defensive at once and tell you he is not so bad as you think he is. Jesus understood human nature. He put Himself in touch with this one whom He sought to save. He let her know that He could sympathize with one who had needs unsupplied. She was at once interested; she listened; and at last she asked drink of Him, not He of her. He led her to see her own need by showing her He had something to give far better than anything she had ever known. Up to that hour she had imagined herself satisfied. Now she discovered her emptiness and cried, "Sir, give me this water, that I thirst no more, neither come hither to draw." Blessed discovery! for then the heart seeks its true satisfaction. Though He had not said she was a sinner, in the presence of His purity she was her own accuser; she said, "Come, see a man that told me all things that ever I did."

For months and years over the same road this woman had gone back and forth with her waterpot, a monotonous round. But what a jewelled day in the crown of her years was this when she met the Lord Jesus! Out of that well which represented to her only hard work for daily necessities He drew for her the truth which transfigured her life. So will He bring to us all, in the monotony of daily toil, sweet spiritual refreshment. If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that speaks to thee in the unrest and thirst of thy heart, thou wouldest ask of Him and He would give living water that satisfies. There is no natural thirst of the soul which He cannot and will not fully meet. The longing for pleasure, possession, companionship, love, high ambitions, everything worth having, are all included in the gift of eternal life. We find earthly wells deep and hard to draw. The well-springs within flow without effort. There was no change in the daily routine for this woman, but there was a blessed change in herself. Water had to be provided for the household, and she had to draw it. But the pitcher never seemed heavy any more, because the heart had lost its burden. The pitcher and the well were necessities of physical existence, but she had discovered that she possessed a life within far higher than any material thing. *A pitcher and a well* should never

enslave *a woman*. And ever after, as she drew the bucket from the depths, I fancy I hear her cheerily singing of the living water springing up to everlasting life.

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## STORM AND CALM

[*Matthew viii. 23-27.*

IT is for our comfort Gennesaret's story is told, and also for the rebuke and the strengthening of our weak faith which so dishonors God. The calming of the storm upon the sea is immediately succeeded by the greater miracle of peace in a storm-tossed soul. It is not by chance that one incident follows the other. The miracles were done and the record written for us to know that whether in the material or the spiritual realm Jesus commands and the storm obeys.

If we could comprehend this blessed truth, in every night of trouble this would be our triumphant song, "He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still." We always find the love and power of the Lord sufficient when we trust Him. But we doubt oftener than we trust. It was night. A sudden emergency arose, for which the voyagers were not prepared. Jesus had passed a busy



day, with multitudes thronging Him, the sick and the sinful drawing upon His compassion from dawn to dark. There is a touch of kinship with tired and homeless people the world over in His reply to the man who said to Him just before He went into the boat, "I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest;" "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head."

He was resting His tired head upon a pillow in the little ship, and as they sailed He fell asleep. The faith which pleases God would have been beautifully illustrated had these men, who had seen many proofs of His power, said, "We cannot be in any real danger while He is with us." But because He *seemed* indifferent they not only were afraid, but they questioned His interest in them—"He neither knows nor cares that we perish." Poor distracted hearts! Just so are they tossed to-day on many a stormy sea! And to us, as to these terrified men, the Lord, who is with us in every time of distress, says, "Where is your faith? Why are ye fearful? How is it that you have no faith? How can you be so anxious? Have I not told you that your heavenly Father cares for you, and knows the smallest thing that concerns you, even to the number of the hairs on your head? Why do you not trust your



Father? I am quiet in the midst of the storm because I am Master of it. I am in the boat with you. You go over no rough billows without Me. I am with you always." The boat would have gone over safely if they had not wakened Him with the cry, "Carest Thou not that we perish?" But He pitied their fright—"He knoweth our frame, He remembereth that we are dust;" so He arose and rebuked the wind, and there was a great calm. He can carry us safely through any storm, or He can quiet the waves for us. Sometimes I think the spiritual exhibition of riding through rough waves and winds with Jesus is better than having everything beautifully quiet. Certainly a storm with Him is better than a calm without Him. It is so glorious to know the exceeding greatness of His power to us who believe. In any case, calm or storm, His question searches us: "Wherefore do you doubt?" What is the reason? It is far more reasonable to trust, for

"Whether the wrath of the storm-tossed sea,  
Or demons or men or whatever it be,  
They all shall sweetly obey His will,  
Peace, peace, be still!"

## MY SHEEP

*John x. 1-16; Ezekiel xxxiv. 11-31.*

FIVE hundred times in the Bible God's care of His people is illustrated by the care of a shepherd for his sheep. Sheep are proverbially the dumbest of animals. If they stray away they never find the way back alone. They are dependent for everything upon the shepherd. The most that can be said of them as to intelligence is that they know the voice of the shepherd and follow him. If they get where they cannot hear his voice, alas, poor sheep! The habits of sheep and the customs of shepherds are the same in Palestine now as when Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd"; so we may learn from them how tender and beautiful is the comparison, and how fully we should trust one who calls Himself by that name.

David knew all about the keeping of sheep, and after he left that quiet life and as king of Israel was in the midst of trouble, he found rest and refuge in the thought of God as his shepherd. Only one who knew the perils and needs of helpless sheep, and what a true shepherd does for them, could have written the exquisite Twenty-third Psalm. "He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me

beside the still waters." Food, refreshment, rest, for the hungry, thirsty, tired spirit. "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd; He shall gather the lambs with His arm and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." Personal, tender care according to each one's need.

Streams are few in Bible lands, and they are often rough so that the timid creatures are afraid to drink. So the shepherd leads them to quiet wells they never would find for themselves; then he gives a peculiar whistle, or call, and the sheep come in groups to drink. They never come until he calls, and they stand beside the well until he calls them away. They never mistake the voice; each flock comes at the call of its own shepherd. "My sheep know My voice; I know My sheep and am known of Mine." Sometimes the shepherd makes a quiet little pool in the midst of a noisy stream, where his sheep are not afraid to drink. "In the world ye shall have tribulation—in Me ye shall have peace."

"Peace, perfect peace, with thronging duties pressed;  
To know the will of Jesus, this is rest."

Often the sheep have to go over perilous places to find pasture on the mountains. The shepherd always goes before them, and if they follow him closely they never get too near the

edge of the precipice ; and though the " shadow of death " lurks along the way they walk unconscious of danger because the shepherd is there. " I will fear no evil : for Thou art with me. " It is said that when a wolf gets into the flock, as sometimes happens, the sheep get terribly frightened and run wildly about so that the shepherd cannot defend them. But he hastens to a place where they can see him and calls a long, shrill cry, and when they hear his voice they run together in a solid mass and the wolf is crushed to death. " My sheep hear My voice ; therefore will I save My flock and they shall no more be a prey. "

In some places where the sheep feed there are snake holes in the ground, and the serpents bite the noses of the sheep. It is the shepherd's care to go over the fields, stop up these holes, and destroy the snakes. " Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies. " God takes care of us in the midst of snares and temptations. He makes a way of escape. " Who is he that will harm you if ye be followers of that which is good ? "

David carried to completion his beautiful figure of the shepherding care of God. At night when the sheep come home to the fold the shepherd stands at the gate and they pass one by one under his rod. He would know if one were missing. If one is bruised or lame,

he soothes the hurt with oil ; if one is exhausted he gives it drink from a full dipper of water. So, at life's evening, His sheep pass one by one under the guiding rod of the good Shepherd. He heals the bruised spirit ; His cup of blessing runneth over for the one exhausted with life's journey.

Blessed Shepherd ! if we know Thy voice it is enough. Foes seen or unseen cannot harm ; stupidity and ignorance cannot hinder. We shall find pasture all the day, and shelter in the heavenly fold at last.

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## TRANSFIGURATION

*Matthew xvii. 1-8.*

HERE is a glimpse of heaven. It is only for a moment, but it reveals much that we long to know of that life beyond the veil of the flesh. It was a few days after Jesus had told His disciples of the path of suffering through which they must follow Him that He took the three chosen ones into the mountain to behold His glory. How blessed were they that He could so choose them. Whatever the reason, surely we do long to have it fulfilled in ourselves ; to be so near Him, and so receptive, that He can take us into high mountains, apart, and show

us what the world below never dreams of. None of the three who saw this vision has written the experience. It was written by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, who must have heard it told in graphic words by Peter, James, or John. Peter refers to it in his epistle: "This voice we heard when we were with Him in the holy mount."

It was not a vision merely; it was as real as any incident in the earthly life of Jesus, and its disclosures of the heavenly world are to our eager inquiries most satisfactory. While His three attendants slept Jesus was communing with the Father in prayer. Suddenly awaking, they saw Him transfigured; the same they had known and loved and talked with many years, and yet so gloriously different their human eyes could scarcely bear the sight. Once the body had obscured the spirit; now the transcendent spirit enveloped and obscured the form of flesh. And yet they knew Him. The change had not effaced the familiar lines of face and figure. The moment Peter awoke he called Him Lord.

In all things Jesus was made like us. There will come a day to those who follow Him in the path of holy love and obedience to the Father's will, when they shall be glorified together with Him. We shall have bodies like unto His glorious body; changed, yet the same, and readily recognized by those who have known



the familiar face and figure in earthly companionship. His most intimate friends never saw the real Jesus until these favored men saw Him unveiled in the transfiguration. They had seen the outer man; here they saw the Deity within—the pure, heavenly radiance of the divine Son of God. We sometimes catch glimpses of beauty of soul in men and women of Christlike character; their faces seem transparent with the light within. It is a foregleam of their transfiguration when the earthly veil shall fall away. Shall we know them? Surely, just as the disciples knew their Lord.

But heaven is revealed to human comprehension perhaps even more clearly by the two visitors who came from there to talk with Jesus. Moses had been for centuries a resident of that country we say is “far,” while yet it is so near; Elijah had lived there ages. And yet they were recognized by the disciples as “two men” like themselves. They had no wings. They looked natural, and appeared quite at home on that earthly mountain. Heaven does not seem to effect such changes as will make us sorry when we see our friends again even after years of separation. Their conversation showed what interest the inhabitants of heaven take in the affairs of earth—not those petty, silly things that spiritualistic “mediums” talk of, which high-minded persons would scorn to spend much



thought upon even while living here, in a material body. But Moses and Elijah talked of concerns which are always uppermost in the thought of those who are in fellowship with Jesus whether on earth or in heaven. Can we think it possible that those who are to-day busy with work for the kingdom of Christ here, and to-morrow are gone from us to the unseen world, have lost all interest in such work? Can those who loved us and prayed for us here cease to do service there for the "heirs of salvation"? St. Paul said, literally rendering his words, "We are deliberately willing to leave home in the body and *to get home* to the Lord." Home is rest, refuge, activity, love, service.

This one little glimpse from the Mount of Transfiguration makes us feel like Christian, who saw inside the gates from the Delectable Mountains—"he wished himself among them." But there is distress in the valley; we must go down there and stay a while to help others up into the heights.

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### THREE TABERNACLES

*2 Peter i. 16-18; Luke ix. 28-36.*

THREE tabernacles let us build! It is the yearning of the human for the heavenly. Let us detain these visitors from the unseen. Let

us enfold this revelation in some way that our natural senses may hold it. Master, it is good to be here where faith, through sight, has a grasp upon the things we have dreamed of, hoped for, and faintly believed.

It was a moment of bewildering rapture. The man knew not what he said. But it was not an illusion; it was the real, though imperfect, vision of the soul. It was a moment's glimpse of heaven, a strain of its melody, a proof never to be doubted of what the Master had taught. Years afterwards this man wrote, "We have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of His Majesty. For He received from God the Father honor and glory, when there came such a voice to Him from the excellent glory, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with Him in the holy mount." The reality stayed with Peter. He could not doubt the excellent glory, nor that God spoke from heaven so that men could hear. But these verities did not become his fixed possession by building earthly tabernacles to enshrine them. They were his forever, to his everlasting joy, only through faith in God's word, the light that shines in a dark place until the day star

arises in the heart. Peter passed through many shadows of unbelief after that mountain vision. Sight and sound from heaven lost power to hold him steadfast. He learned that tabernacles for spiritual possessions were not built on Galilean mountains of earthly materials, but in the valley where the sinful and the suffering needed help; built of love, and faith, and prayer. He knew it when he wrote of the preciousness of the trial of faith, the joy of loving without seeing, and the hope that fadeth not away reserved in heaven.

Three tabernacles we may build where heavenly visitors will stay with us, and where Jesus will make His abode. They are Faith, Hope, Love. We build them in the valley of sanctified sorrow, and in the believing ministry to all who are in need.

Let us build right here where Peter stood that wonderful day, with James and John. Jesus is transfigured before them. His face, His form, His garments, "become another," shining, exceeding white as snow, and yet He is the same. We shall be like Him; we shall all be changed; we shall walk with Him in white.

What are these in white robes, and whence came they? These are the redeemed from earth who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. No

wonder Moses and Elias talked with Jesus only of His crucifixion at Jerusalem. All the hope of earth and joy of heaven depended upon that. Faith will more firmly hold to the atonement of our Lord when we see it is the absorbing theme of heaven. Every report that has come to us from that home of saints and angels is that they talk and sing of the Lamb that was slain, as the angels sang at Bethlehem, "Unto you is born a Saviour."

There talked with Jesus "two men"—long, long ago they lived on earth, ages and ages they had been in heaven, but they were men still. They had no wings; they were not grotesque; they were unlike earthly beings only in their shining robes and their power to come and go with the swiftness of light. Both of them had been mightily interested in the will and purpose of God towards the world. They were interested still. They had clearer vision now than when Moses said, "Why is it Thou hast sent me? Thou hast not delivered this people at all," and Elijah sat under the juniper tree. Yes, the mountain vision reveals the things we yearn to know. Jesus is verily the Son of God; His spiritual body shone through the material, and glorified Him; human beings remain the same in heaven, in identity, and in interest in earth's welfare; God speaks from heaven so that men can hear;

the dying of the Lord Jesus is the testimony of the eye-witness; he knew it was no cunningly devised fable.

But the mountain vision will not stay. Faith only can enshrine it in our hearts. Hope must wait in happy expectation. Love must watch and work, beside the cross; and when the rapture passes, and we stand upon the dull, bare sod, it will be enough for us if through mists and mysteries we see Jesus only.

“ Lord, lead us to the mountain height;  
 To prayer’s transfiguring glow;  
 And clothe us with the Spirit’s might  
 For grander work below.”

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## PITY AND POWER

*Mark i. 29-45.*

*PITY and power.* This is the beginning and the end of the Gospel of the Son of God. “Moved with compassion, He put forth His hand”—heart of love, hand of might. This is your Saviour and mine.

“ With pitying eyes the Prince of Peace  
 Beheld our helpless grief;  
 He saw, and oh, amazing love!  
 He flew to our relief.”

“In His love and in His pity He redeemed them.”

Jesus said, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father.” If you would know the heart of God, it is open to you in this record of the ministry of Jesus among the sick and sinful people of Capernaum. If we would ourselves minister comfort and healing to those about us who need our help so much, we, like our Lord, must have the fullness of the Holy Spirit, the spiritual world opened to our vision, and the love of the Father abiding upon us and in us. He said that after the coming of the Holy Spirit upon them His disciples should do greater works even than these miracles which He wrought. So, although we cannot heal the sick, nor cast out demons by a word, yet by His power working through us the miracle of the world’s regeneration is being wrought day by day. The saddest sight I see—yes, sadder than the sin and suffering for which God’s great love has devised a remedy and a compensation—is the sight of a professed follower of Christ selfishly indifferent to life’s grand opportunities. What can the pity or the power of Jesus do for those who say they love Him and yet can never be counted upon for service which interferes with ease or convenience?

In these verses a beautiful story of His pity and power for friends in trouble is told. We



meet here His first disciples, Simon, Andrew, James and John. There was a closer bond than that of brothers between Simon and Andrew since the day Andrew brought Simon to Jesus. How we love those who have helped us to come to Him! Such ties are sweet on earth and will surely be sweet in heaven.

These four friends, with Jesus, went home to the house of Simon after the Sabbath service in the synagogue. But there was a shadow upon the household. Their hearts were so burdened for the dear mother who was ill that they could scarcely welcome the guests until they had told their anxiety to Jesus. How promptly He answered the call! How ready His sympathy! He came and took her by the hand and lifted her up. How wonderful His power! The fever left her. Think of the joy in that house that Sabbath morning!

A beautiful tribute is paid to this woman's character in the simple words, "She arose and ministered unto them." We would excuse her if she had spent the rest of the day in talking about herself and her wonderful experience, allowing herself to be waited upon as the chief person of interest in the family. That would have seemed natural. Most persons would have done so. But her love and gratitude were so genuine that she forgot herself in ministering to Jesus and His friends.



St. Mark tells nothing more about her, but another historian of the early Church says Peter's wife went with him on his apostolic preaching tours, going into the homes of the women where her husband could not go, to give to them the good gospel news—a "zenana teacher" of the first century. If this is so, very possibly these same loving mother hands ministered to the family in her absence. And whose shall be the brighter crown, hers who went out to teach, or hers who relieved another of household cares so that she might serve the Master outside of the home?



## AND NOW I SEE

*John ix.*

THERE was but one purpose in the thought of Jesus as He walked upon earth—to help and to save, if possible, every suffering creature. There were no lost opportunities in His life. "As He passed by He saw." No one was unnoticed; to no one was He indifferent. He never discussed sociology. He was not restricted in His charities to any "society for the relief of the poor." Sympathy and help for the one in need was His only theory and His unfailing practice. Oh, blessed heart of Jesus, we long to be like Thee in Thy unselfish love!

His disciples began with the sociological and ethical problem. Was this man's affliction the punishment for sin? Was it his own sin, or is it a case of heredity? Scientific charity would call it "atavism." His grandfather was bad, therefore this man is blind. Sympathetic love called it a case of need and hastened to relieve it. Jesus said the important thing is not whether this man sinned or his ancestors, but that the works of God should be manifested in him. "I have only one concern," He said, "and that is to do God's work without delay before the opportunity goes by."

What is it to do the works of God? To love the sinner and the sufferer as God loves him; to help him as God would help him; not to inquire why or how he got where he is, but to lift him out of the mire and set him upon a rock; not to ask how he became blind, but to show him where to find sight. How much we have to learn from the words and ways of the Master! He came to seek and to save that which was lost, and He pursued this object in the most simple and direct way, by His words, His acts, and the influence of His pure and loving spirit. All were not helped, because some would not take what He had to give; but to those who would receive He gave healing and comfort. "As long as I am in the world I am the light of the world," He said. He also says

to you and to me if we are His disciples, "Ye are the light of the world." "As the Father hath sent Me, even so send I you." If only we would learn of Jesus how much more good we might do, with much less hurry and fret and self. He rested in God. His life was a manifestation of God's love and salvation.

" Not a surge of worry,  
Not a shade of care,  
Not a blast of hurry  
Touch the spirit there."

There may be a lesson in this incident we have not yet discovered. Jesus said this man was a sufferer that the works of God should be manifested in him, or through him. This may throw some light on the mystery of pain. The "how" or "why" baffles our search. God alone understands the mystery; but the fact we know. Is it only evil? Can any good come out of the world's heart-breaking care and pain? Yes; it may be the occasion by which the heart of God may be made known to human hearts. If by your sympathy and your sacrifice to help another you win some poor desolate soul to believe in *you*, that soul is a step nearer believing in the God whose work of love you are trying to do. Every sorrowful, sinful soul may be your opportunity to show

how God loves, and pities, and seeks to save. Pain and sorrow are veiled angels of mercy to lead back to God the humanity sin has separated from Him.

Let us get yet another lesson from this man before we leave him joyfully adoring the One who has healed his poor blind eyes. This blessing came through his obedience. He had long known of Siloam. Perhaps he had bathed his face in its waters. He might have said, like Naaman, "Why should I go there to wash?" But, groping his way to the pool, not yet seeing, but obeying, he returned with perfect sight. "If any man will *do* His will, he shall *know*." It was no uncertain knowledge that he gained. "You may speculate, cavil, laugh, if you will; but one thing I know: whereas I was blind, now I see."

There is a similar spiritual experience. The eyes of the soul are opened through faith and obedience. We know, ourselves, the change, and others know it too. Oh, what visions we have of this life and the life beyond when our blind eyes are opened by the touch of Jesus! Is this the man that sat and begged? "He is like him," some say. The man says, "I am he." The same, yet gloriously different; so different that it mattered little that they cast him out of the temple, for he had found the real place of worship, the spiritual altar, the true sacrifice,

the living, loving Jesus. Lord, open Thou mine eyes that I may see.

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## JESUS' ANSWER TO A WOMAN'S PRAYER

*Matt. xv. 21-28.*

THIS Syrophenician woman was an optimist. The deepest, darkest cloud could not make her doubt there was a clear sun behind it, and the rainbow was only waiting a while to fling out its triumphant banner. All people of faith are optimists.

“ Faith, mighty faith, the promise sees,  
And looks to that alone ;  
Laughs at impossibilities,  
And cries, ‘ It shall be done ! ’ ”

True Christian optimism does not ignore the facts either of sin or of sorrow. It sees them with a reliable and straightforward vision ; while pessimism surrounds them with darkness which makes them distorted and unreal. This woman knew only too well the unspeakable pain of a real sorrow, and its utter hopelessness to the ordinary view. Her daughter was grievously vexed with a devil. A deep, dense shadow had fallen upon her heart and upon

her home. But, realizing the full force of most painful facts, she believed there was a remedy. She turned her back upon the darkness and set her face towards the light.

That this optimistic spirit was pleasing to Jesus is shown by His treatment of this woman, and by His yielding every objection to her plea for help. It is wholesome to search the Bible and see what God says about faith. Without faith it is impossible to please Him. With faith it seems as if He would forgive and forget every failing, every sin. The faith which believes He can and will do the best possible for every human creature, in both temporal and spiritual concerns, certainly honors Him. Timidity which doubts and is afraid to ask is a reflection upon His power, His goodness, and His love.

I love to ponder the story of this distressed mother. There is hope in it for every other mother, and for all who have a heartache too deep to tell to any one but Jesus. She was desperate, and her prayer was very simple. She felt too much to say much. Lord, help me, was the sum of her soul-cry. Her earnestness and her faith were the kind that can bear testing; so at first Jesus answered her not a word. Then He seemed to repulse her, although His words were not really so harsh as they seem to us in the cold translation. To her ear they gave a faint encouragement, and in her reply



were all the elements of "fervent, effectual prayer which availeth much." She said "*Truth, Lord, yet.*" In these three little words is the true spirit of prayer. It was as if she had said: "All Thou sayest is true. I am not worthy to receive the blessing I ask. I know there are others who should come before me in Thy thought of mercy. I do not plead my worthiness, I only plead my need. But Thou art Lord. Thou hast power to do even more than I ask. I am wholly in Thy hand to be dealt with as Thou wilt. Yet, although Thou knowest my unworthiness, and dost see many reasons why I should not hope for help, my extreme need will move Thy compassion; I believe Thy goodness, Thy justice, Thy mercy, and Thy love will hear and answer my request."

To such a prayer there can be but one answer from such a God as ours: "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." It was not her importunity nor her humility that Jesus commended, although elsewhere He teaches that these are important factors in prevailing prayer. It was her faith that pleased Him; her faith brought the gift she so importunately asked. The brightest, most confiding, hopeful view of God's dealings with ourselves and with the world, is the truest, and the one which pleases Him best. We cannot believe too much.



Nothing is too hard for God ; nothing is too good to expect of Him. Everything adverse to our prayer may be true ; but He is Lord. He rules where our poor management is futile. No case is too desperate for Him. Let us please Him with an optimistic faith which will not doubt even under the darkest cloud or in the deepest night.

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## CAPERNAUM

*Mark i. 21-45*

WHEN I read this sweet story of old, when Jesus was here among men, I think how blessed it would have been to hear and see Him as He went about doing good. Yet it is better to live here, and now, than to have lived in Capernaum two thousand years ago. We are enjoying many things unknown then, because His kingdom of peace and good will is extending over the earth. Jesus is here, going about doing good through men, women, and children who have His spirit of love and help for the poor and sick and sinful. This is not only the record of a day long past ; it illustrates the present living spirit of Jesus in Christian philanthropy that seeks everywhere

to help the helpless. "Love has yet its Galilee."

"The healing of the seamless dress  
Is by our beds of pain ;  
We touch Him in life's throng and press,  
And we are whole again."

The way in which Jesus spent this Sabbath day shows us the true spirit of Sabbath keeping. In the morning He went to the synagogue. The formality of worship, the "teaching for doctrine the commandments of men," must have been to Him distasteful. He knew much more than all the rabbis ; He might well have preferred to "study nature" by the seashore or on the mountains, or to stay at home and rest after a wearisome week of teaching, preaching, and healing. If any one could be excused from public worship surely Jesus might. But it was His custom on the Sabbath to go to the synagogue. It is a distinct loss to ourselves if we fail to follow this example of the Master.

In the synagogues any one present was at liberty to speak. Jesus lost no opportunity to give the gospel message. It was new teaching. The people were astonished. He spoke with authority, and His words carried conviction. Suddenly in the silence of the congregation there was a piercing cry. If men did not know

who Jesus was, demons from the unseen world knew. An unclean spirit, possessing a man present, cried out, "Let us alone; what have we to do with Thee, Thou Jesus of Nazareth? art Thou come to destroy us? I know Thee who Thou art, the Holy One of God."

"To destroy us before the time." The devils believe and tremble. They know the Conqueror. They know there comes a time when, with their leader, they will be cast into the bottomless pit. It is a fearful thought that men believe less than the demons who tempt them to sin, "led captive by Satan at his will."

But over this unseen but very real realm of evil spirits Jesus holds the sceptre. The demon overmastered the man, but fell powerless at the word of the Master. "Hold thy peace, and come out of him," the stern voice said, and with one malicious effort he threw the man in the midst of the people, but came out "and hurt him not." Wonderful Saviour! "the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." Unclean spirits are cast out still, leaving the soul unhurt; for He is a full, complete, victorious Saviour, able to cleanse away every stain of sin and to present us faultless in the presence of His glory with exceeding joy.

From the synagogue Jesus went with Andrew and Peter, James and John, to Peter's home. Three guests were there on the Sab-

bath day ; Jesus, James, and John. Andrew may have lived there, as he was Peter's brother. May we visit on Sunday? Yes, if Jesus is with us ; surely not without Him. His presence makes social fellowship consistent with keeping the day holy. But this is very different from social gayety where no one thinks of Him, His honor, or His pleasure.

There was great anxiety in this home ; the mother was seriously ill. Capernaum was built on low land by the lake ; this fever was malarial probably, the result of a natural cause. Why ask the Lord to set aside the laws of health and sickness and make this woman well? Good drainage might have prevented the illness ; good care may restore her ; but is it not fanaticism to ask God to interfere? The Mighty One who casts out devils is Lord of law. The natural result of the fever would be death ; the touch of Jesus is life. He touched her hand, and the fever left her. We suffer many things which might be averted by better knowledge and better care. But the divine pity can and does often turn events in our favor. Trust Jesus. All power is His in heaven and earth.

There is a fever of the spirit. Even now the hot blood surges through your heart as you think of some trial, duty, sorrow, you must bear. How shall you be quiet, cool, and

strong? Jesus needs empty hands to do His will. When His own touch empties them we can cheerfully give up our dearest treasures. He needs clean hands; His own are pierced for us, and the blood cleanseth. He needs ready, skillful, helpful hands. He touched her hands, and she arose and ministered unto them.

“ Whatever the fever, His touch can heal it ;  
    Whatever the tempest, His voice can still ;  
There is only joy as we seek His pleasure,  
    There is only rest as we choose His will.

“ And some day after life’s fitful fever,  
    I think we shall say in the home on high,  
‘ If the hands He touched but did His bidding  
    How little it matters what else went by.’

“ Ah, Lord ! Thou knowest us altogether,  
    Each heart’s sore sickness whatever it be ;  
Touch Thou our hands ! let the fever leave us,  
    And so shall we minister unto Thee.”

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## A WEDDING DAY

*John ii. 1-11.*

JESUS was, and is, the friend of joy. All the happiness in this world is His gift. The pain and disappointment He constantly relieves. There is a tradition that He never smiled; but no such thing is written in the New Testament story of His life. I am sure it is not true. Can

you think of Him at a marriage feast with friends and relatives, never once smiling as He greeted them, or when the pleasant things it is so natural to say at such a time were said? If He had disapproved of social pleasures He would not have been there. If His mother had not felt sure He was in sympathy with the occasion she would not have spoken to Him of the failure of the wine, which would have been an unpleasant occurrence for the host, and a matter for criticism by the guests. It was an evidence of His sympathy with the smallest human interests that He prevented what would have marred the social success of that wedding supper. It is significant that such an occasion was chosen to be the beginning of His miracles. Weddings are times of universal interest in the lives of men and women. Jesus here identifies Himself with us in the sphere of common experience. He cares about all that interests us. He lifts human affairs to the plane of heavenly sympathy and brings God in touch with things which concern us every day.

I think this incident may help to decide some questions which perplex many disciples of the Lord Jesus. As His follower how far may I enjoy social pleasure? How much time is it right to spend in self-culture in art, music, or whatever is not directly considered work for Him? Must I give up everything else for re-



religious reading? A study of the life and spirit of Jesus gives a reasonable and rational answer. He was not a recluse. He lived in intimate communion with God, His Father, and yet He was almost never apart from human association except in nights of prayer, when others were sleeping. He was often at social gatherings. His critics said He was a friend of publicans and sinners because He met them as fellow men, not in the pharisaical spirit which says, "Stand aside, for I am holier than thou." But when we read what He said and did on such occasions we discover that His whole purpose in being there was to make the people whom He met better and happier for His presence. He came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. The disciple must follow the Master. An ascetic life cannot be a useful life. A spirit out of sympathy with the joys of others cannot get near to them to help them. A narrow, uninformed mind is not the most influential. The highest culture united with the deepest love makes the disciple most like his Lord.

Let us take the saying of the mother of Jesus for our own life motto and we will find the guide to right conduct, "Whatsoever He saith to you, do it." That is, let His will be your sincere, unswerving choice. Then fill to the brim your mind and heart with everything pure, lovely, and of good report; take life as His



providence offers it, with all its opportunities of enjoyment and fellowship ; then, as He directs, draw out the wine of love, service, good cheer, sympathy—every grace that makes your own heart and the hearts of others happy. In fellowship with Him we shall have that divine magnetism which drew the publicans and sinners near to Him to hear Him. We may follow Him in our pleasures if we have His purpose and His spirit.

Both Jesus and His disciples were called to this marriage feast. Certainly no disciple can accept an invitation which does not include the presence of the Master.

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## JESUS HIMSELF KNEW

*John vi. 1-15.*

How to help the helpless multitudes is the problem always before the disciples of Jesus. Our resources are not enough. We cannot meet the need. Send them away ; do not think about them ; let them take care of themselves. That is the way thoughtless people reason ; but the problem is not answered, nor the responsibility disposed of. Jesus says : “ Give ye them to eat ; they have brought themselves into straits by coming into this desert place in such crowds,

but their mistakes and failures do not take away your responsibility to help them out of their trouble." And so He teaches us that the poor, the needy, and even the shiftless people are to be cared for with patience and consideration. Yes, with more than that, for if we are like Jesus we will have "compassion" for them. Compassion is a sweeter thought than pity. Pity may be cold, contemptuous, and may make the one whom it helps extremely uncomfortable. Compassion is sympathetic; it never tears open a wound, but touches gently and seeks to heal it. Jesus had compassion on the multitude because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

And how did Jesus teach His disciples to care for these multitudes? It was a desert place; there was no possibility of adding to their resources; they had very little; but the work was there to be done, and the situation had to be faced just as it was. He said, Begin with what you have. He knew if they obeyed His word all their needs would be supplied. They saw only five loaves and two little fishes; He saw infinite resources that would keep coming, and coming, until every one's hunger would be satisfied, and there would be abundance left over. What an impertinence it would have been for any one of the disciples to say, "How useless to attempt to feed five thousand people here!" Or to have fretted and worried, while

they were passing the bread and fish, for fear the supply would give out; or that there would not be enough left for themselves. If any of them did feel that way I am glad we are not told it; we know too many of that sort.

St. John says that Jesus asked Philip what he thought could be done with this problem of the masses, but He asked only to prove him, for He Himself knew what He would do. Philip was not wise enough to answer, "Lord, Thou knowest." He began to talk about the impossibilities. Andrew mentioned the resources in hand, but said the demand was far beyond their ability. How different would have been their view of the situation if they had realized that it was no problem to Jesus. Happy would it be for us if, when we have some work to do and a very small loaf of ability to accomplish it, we had faith to say in quiet confidence, "Jesus knows what He will do." Our part is to follow His direction. This is the secret of working without fretting. We must do our part in the world's work, but it dishonors God to be anxious, as though He could not manage without us or had lost control of His own universe. We very much need this quickness of obedience and faith when responsibilities and perplexities press upon us. In the days of Moses six hundred thousand people were hungry in the desert, and the Lord promised to

feed them. Moses's faith faltered, and there seems almost a touch of irony in his question, "Shall all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, to suffice them?" And the Lord said unto Moses, Is the Lord's hand waxed short? Thou shalt now see whether My word shall come to pass or not. And he did see. Every one who waits God's time, and takes God's way, sees. But, though the Lord has infinite resources and almighty power, He uses human hands, and brains and hearts to accomplish His purposes. He gave the loaves and fishes to His disciples to distribute. He allows no waste of energy or material. He approves of order and system. He made the people sit down in companies, so that the food could be given quickly and easily, and none need be overlooked. And when all were satisfied twelve basketfuls were left over. One for each of the twelve disciples. I wonder if they were all there, and if this outcome of that marvellous feeding of the multitude taught them how the Lord cares for all who care for His needy ones. Never do we share with another our own little loaf of comfort, of grace, or of material good things, without finding our own supply increased.

When we pray for others He blesses us exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think. When we give time and thought and love to

make this hungry, tired world better and happier He enriches our own hearts, and makes life for us worth living. It is blessed to feed our hungry neighbors and find a great basketful of the Lord's good things left over for ourselves.

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## THE CLOSING DAYS

*John xix. ; Luke xxii. 39-53 ; Mark xiv. 32-72 ;  
Hebrews ix.*

WE study this last day of Jesus' human life upon earth with deepest reverence. Pilate's judgment hall, the mad mob of Jews, the curious crowd, are historically true ; but far more is suggested than is written. Beyond the sacred page are truths vitally in touch with your life and mine. It is a transparency through which we see, if we have clear sight, the majesty and glory of sacrificial suffering for such as seemed utterly unworthy of the sacrifice. The things of sense are superficial ; the unseen are the realities. The occurrences of this day are not now familiar to the minds of many, but the moral and spiritual forces behind them are still working with intense power in the world. We may forget what we do and say to-day, but the secret influences of words and deeds, both good and bad, are imperishable ; they affect our own

character now, and some day we shall be surprised to find how they have affected others.

Pilate was a Roman. He had never read the Scriptures that prophesied of Christ. He had probably never seen Jesus, and knew little about Him until that day. Jesus said the one who delivered Him to Pilate had the greater sin; for Caiaphas had been taught in the Scriptures and might have known, if he would, who Jesus was and what was His mission to this world. The dull ignorance and moral blindness of one who resists the Holy Spirit, sinning in the face of light, is worse than the case of one who never had a chance to know the truth. Resisting the Holy Spirit is like destroying the nerve of the eye. Nothing can restore sight when the nerve is gone. We cannot see spiritual truth when we quench the light of the Spirit.

But Pilate could not be excused for his vacillating, unfair repudiation of his own convictions concerning Jesus. He had sufficient light of conscience and conviction to have brought him into the kingdom if he had honestly followed them. He was impressed with the dignity and self-control of this strange, silent prisoner in such vast contrast with His accusers. He found no reason to condemn Him. Something in the majestic presence of Jesus woke the soul of the pagan. He felt, though he did not see, the unseen. "What is truth?"



was not altogether a question of contempt. It was the smothered cry of an unresting soul. He could not wholly reject this man; he could not give the order to crucify Him; he would rather release Him; but if he were known as Jesus' friend, Cæsar might take his position from him. Self triumphed; Jesus was delivered to His enemies to be crucified. Vacillation, unfaithfulness to conviction, self, ruined the man whose attitude towards Jesus was not at first unfriendly. These secret motives worked to their legitimate end. Pilate died by his own hand, a disappointed, thwarted, hopeless man.

The attitude of the Jews towards Jesus was different from that of the Roman governor. They had seen His life; they had heard His teaching; they knew the Scriptures and were expecting a Messiah, a King. But "for envy" they crucified Him. His words had been a sharp sword in their conscience; He had uncovered their sins; He had scorned their hypocritical worship; He had said that publicans and sinners should enter the kingdom of God rather than the self-righteous Pharisee, and He had claimed to speak with the authority of the Son of God. They were bitter, because He was their accuser. Away with Him, He troubleth us! Do you put Jesus away from your thoughts because His teaching, His



standards, His requirements, trouble you? His truth cuts to the heart; it smites our will, pride, ambition, self, and we resent it; with our mind we assent to His truth; we admire His life and His character, but to stand by conviction, or to follow the clear leading of the Holy Spirit would interfere with worldly prosperity; it would forfeit friendships; it might cost us position; it is too much to ask; self triumphs, Jesus is rejected. What a strange sight must Pilate's judgment hall have been to the watching angels! They knew the glory of Jesus with the Father before the world began, and here they saw Him mocked by the men He came to save. But that sight is not so strange as to see one who knows as much of Jesus as you and I know, mocking Him with insincere worship; calling Him King but refusing to obey Him; putting Him to shame by our disloyalty in the presence of His enemies.

He said to His disciples, "The servant is not greater than his Lord; if they have persecuted Me they will also persecute you." We are not like our Lord if we never meet opposition in our Christian life. If we are true as He was true, the world will have mockings and scourgings for us if we come in its way. He is our example. How His strength and steadiness of soul contrast with human meanness! He saw the unseen. That vision will hold us steadfast

in every stress of trial and temptation. There never was a time when the friends of Jesus were more tested than now. Some are saying, "Master," and betraying Him with a kiss. He is before the world's judgment seat; every day brings the crisis nearer. Mohammedans, Jews, Pagans, Christians, like the crowds in Jerusalem, hold various attitudes towards Him, blind as the mob that cried, "Away with Him; let Him be crucified." What is our attitude? Is it loving, loyal allegiance to Him, as our Saviour and King? This is our testing time. He gives His best to those who bear the test.

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## THE SHADOW OF GETHSEMANE

WITH reverent step we enter the shadows of Gethsemane. It seems a place too sacred for human speech. Like the disciples, we "wist not what to say." The prayers, the agony of that midnight hour we cannot understand. Even our thoughts "wear holy veils on their faces" as we approach the scene. Jesus, our brother in all human experiences, leaves all human companionship at the threshold of this place apart. He trod the wine-press alone and of the people there was none with Him. Why He endured such anguish, why the pressure

upon His soul forced great drops of blood from His forehead to the ground are mysteries hidden in the eternal councils of the Godhead. No man can break the seal. But that descent of the world's Redeemer into the depths of darkness is as true a fact of history as His ascent to the heavenly glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. We must not reason, we must only believe the written record, "Thus it behooved Christ to suffer."

The cup He prayed might pass from Him was not the fear of death nor the shame of the cross. He had calmly talked of these things with His disciples. He came to Jerusalem with them in view. Death had no terror for Jesus. He who could call a soul back to this earthly life from the unseen world could have no fear of dying. He who said, "He that loveth his life shall lose it" could not shrink from the reproach and pain of the cross. Gethsemane's woe was deeper than death. Jesus did more than give His life for the world; He suffered the anguish, the pain, the horror of its sin. By inspiration ages before, the prophet wrote, "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him; the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all; by His stripes we are healed." No one has ever explained it; thousands have believed it, and found the peace

and the healing. It is a sad revealing of human weakness that even those nearest Him, who loved Him most could sleep while their Master suffered.

Three times during His agony He came to speak to them, but they slept. He wondered they could not watch with Him one hour, yet with the tender sympathy of the Son of man He said, "The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak." Does He wonder that we too are heavy with sleep? That we so faintly realize that the anguish of Gethsemane was borne for us? That if Jesus had not taken that bitter cup it would have been our portion to drink it? Not because a vindictive and revengeful God would relentlessly punish every sinner if Jesus had not suffered in his stead—oh, no, no, far from that! But because sin is like a cancer eating out humanity's heart, and God's love, not His vengeance, must find a remedy that will be a perfect cure. "By His stripes we are healed." You do not understand it? No, you do not understand the medicine your physician uses when you are desperately ill, but you trust Him and take it and recover your health. Sweet gospel message! Can we hear it without tender, grateful tears? Is the shadow of Gethsemane so dark you would rather turn from it to brighter thoughts? Deepest shadows fall where the

light is brightest. Gethsemane is dark because the glory of the divine love shines there. There is never a joyous hour in your life but is yours because the soul of Jesus was sorrowful even unto death for your sake. Tears are wiped from your face because great drops of blood fell from His brow. The whole world would be in outer darkness to-day if He had not met the hour and the power of darkness and conquered for us.

You may be glad—Jesus bore your sorrow. You can be good—Jesus bore your sin. You possess heaven—Jesus bore the pains of the lost that you might never know them. Do not reason about it; reason cannot now reach to the height or depth of the love of God in Christ Jesus. The ages will unfold the mystery. Take the simple truth to your heart: Love suffered in Gethsemane for me. What shall we give in return for love like this? We have nothing to equal it, but let us give our best. Let us give the devotion of our hearts and the service of our lives.

We may be brought to our Gethsemane where we suffer for ourselves and for others because of sin, not as Jesus suffered, for He was alone in that mysterious sorrow, but where we are indeed exceeding sorrowful even unto death. Let us be comforted to know that we are in the "fellowship of His sufferings," and

through Him we shall have the fellowship of His victory. May the blessed Spirit teach us the wisdom, the sweetness, the power of Christ's own prayer, Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done.

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### THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS

IT was fitting night should veil the scenes that followed Gethsemane. They are too painful for the glare of open day. The sun withdrew in darkness when the cross was raised on Calvary. Jerusalem lay in the shadow of the darkest hour before the dawn when Jesus was betrayed, despised, rejected. A strange sight was this. Our great High Priest, who ever liveth to make intercession for us, by whose word every soul shall be condemned or justified, was buffeted, spit upon, scorned in the presence of this man holding the high priest's office for one short hour of power. They blindfolded Jesus, the all-seeing. How heavy was the veil upon their hearts; how blind, how ignorant they were. But stop, and think; is there no veil upon our own hearts? Do we never question His authority or His truth, nor smite Him with our pride, our selfishness, our indifference? Had they known they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. We do know, for we are



taught in the Word and by the Holy Spirit. If we reject Him and put Him to shame by our unbelief and disobedience, we are worse than those who reviled Him in the court of Caiaphas. These people were scribes, teachers, patterns of religion. There is something to think of here. "No wickedness is so great and so heartless as that upon which sacred influences have long been operating; no corruption so hateful as that of a dead religion." These false witnesses had heard Jesus every day teaching in the temple. Professing Christians untrue to Him in spirit and in conduct are bearing false witness against Him now. They are the greatest hindrance to the spreading of His Gospel. If all who have heard His teaching were true witnesses, the world would soon believe in Him. These men bore false witness by misrepresenting what they had heard Jesus say. We, yes even we, do the same thing. We have heard Him say that we must not be anxious about food and clothing or any affairs in life that we cannot manage, because our heavenly Father cares for us. And we go about with care-worn faces, fretful voices, hurrying, worrying, as if He had said just the opposite of what He did say.

We have heard Him say that He has power to forgive sin, to save from sin, to deliver from the power of sin; and we let our bad temper, our selfishness, and all the unlovely things in



us keep the mastery, just as if He had never said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." In many ways we bear false witness of Him, and the world is hearing not what He says, but what we say—and oh, to think that we who call ourselves His friends could witness against Him in the presence of His enemies!

The silence of Jesus among the strife of tongues teaches us a great lesson; the majesty of self-control; the dignity of conscious integrity; the power of a quiet spirit; the silent force of right over wrong. Shall we ever learn to be in any degree like our Master? Peter, who saw His marvellous self-restraint afterwards wrote, What glory is it when you are buffeted for your faults you take it patiently? But if when you do well and suffer for it you take it patiently—ah, then! you have something of His spirit who when He was reviled, reviled not again, but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously. Be quiet; wait God's time; if you are right He will make others see it some day. If you are wrong, trust Him to deal with you justly as a tender, loving Father.

"Set Thou a seal upon my lips  
Just for to-day!"

No incident in the Gospels is more helpful than this honest, straightforward story of Peter.

He loved Jesus; he was one of His confidential friends. He was so sure of his devotion to Him he declared if every one else should forsake Him he never, never would. He meant it; he truly loved and honored his Master, but he was so human, so like us, he knew himself so little. His testing time came; he would not have believed it, not even when Jesus told him of his danger—but he knew himself now! He saw himself mean, cowardly, faithless; and Jesus saw him so too! Oh, that look of those piercing, tender eyes! It was a revelation hard to bear. The most dreadful hour in life is when we lose faith in ourselves; when we see ourselves as God sees us, the hour of conviction of sin. And yet it is a blessed hour. Peter went out and wept bitterly. It must have moved heaven to see that strong man broken-hearted over his faithlessness to Jesus. That bitter hour of self-revealing was better than the hour of his self-confidence. The man who had discovered his weakness was henceforth safer than the man who thought himself so strong. The steps of his fall are clear. He followed Jesus afar off; he put himself in the company of Jesus' enemies; he was afraid to be known as His friend. I am in the same danger; so are you. But the Lord knows His own. He knew Peter, and prayed for him. He knew the bitter tears; He knew His disciple loved Him even

when in weakness he denied Him. Peter wept bitterly, and Peter was forgiven. The Lord sent His first message to him after His resurrection ; He asked him the question that love only asks, Lovest thou Me ? He honored him by speaking through him the first gospel message after Pentecost when three thousand souls were saved. Let us take to heart Peter's own words born of experience. Ye therefore beloved, seeing ye know before, beware lest ye also being led away with the error of the wicked fall from your own steadfastness ; but grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

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### THE GLORY OF THE CROSS

It is a holy place. We tread reverently, we speak with care when we stand beside the cross. We do not try to explain the mystery of the dying of the Son of God. The angels desire to look into it ; but they veil their faces saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive honor and power and glory." Let us with them adoringly worship. As the Shekinah filled the temple, so the glory of the cross shall fill the whole earth. It is the radiance of love. Every illustration seems weak and almost inappropriate ; but we watch

with gaze entranced dark clouds heightened, glorified, magnificent, in the rays of the setting sun and we feel not only the wonder of the present, but the promise also of a coming cloudless morning. Sin and suffering surround the cross with darkness; but the Sun of righteousness, the Light of the world, breaks through, and the promise of a tearless, happy day that knows no night, lifts up earth's weary heart. The radiance streams into every dark corner of the world; into the sin and sorrow of every soul. It is the radiance of the cross that is waking the nations from the sleep of ages. There is unrest everywhere because the light has come. "As truly as I live saith the Lord the whole earth shall be filled with My glory"; the glory of the Divine Love, which finds its full expression in the voluntary offering of Jesus for the life of the world. We very faintly comprehend the meaning of the words, "Who for our sakes became obedient even unto the death of the cross," but they express the utmost infinite possibility of love. At the cross we see the perfect identification of God with humanity—let us bring it nearer and say the identification of God with you and with me, His children. Sin, suffering and death are the greatest facts in human experience. If these were removed life would be one long sweet song set to heavenly music. God

intended us to have just such a life, and put man first, in Eden, where there were no thorns and briars. He will not rest until we find again the place from which sin has driven us. And while He waits He does not sit complaisantly in a far-away heaven looking on the struggle here with no part in its pain. He is a "long-suffering God." He cares for us. He comes to His world in the person of His Son; He lives in the midst of its shame and wrong; He shares its sorrow; He bears the consequences of its sin; He makes Himself so wholly one with us that He bears away our sin, our suffering, our death, in His own body upon the cross.

This is the uttermost word of love that has suffered for us and with us "from the foundation of the world." Oh, the depth of the riches of infinite love! Wait at the cross until you feel it. Hear Him say, "It is finished." What is finished? Not the physical pain; the two men crucified with Him suffered that. Not His human life where He endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself; He was not speaking of anything our thought can measure when He said, "It is finished," but of the unswerving, unchanging eternal purpose of love to redeem every human soul from the power of sin, suffering and death. The will of love was then fulfilled. He shall see of the travail of his

soul and be satisfied. Love begins with God. We love Him because He first loved us. Love seeks response. The tender emotion that stirs your heart as you gratefully say, "He died for me," your loyal service, your loving trust, is the response He waits for.

The many incidents of the crucifixion told by each writer of the Gospels show, when we compare them with prophecy, that the Holy Spirit foretold its minute details. Nothing in the death of Jesus was accidental. It was done by human hands, through human hate; but it was His own voluntary offering of Himself for us. Calvary will never move the heart from its sin and selfishness merely as an exhibition of self-sacrificing love. There is something deeper than this which only the Holy Spirit can show us. When St. Paul said, "I am determined to know nothing among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified," he did not mean that any man's ministry of love and sacrifice would save men from the ruin of sin. He meant that the cross is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believes; that by a mystery unexplained to human reason it creates a "new creature" set free from the guilt and power of sin. He was wounded for our transgressions, the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. It is all love; love from the beginning,



love to the end. "Herein is love, not that we loved God but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins."

Surely, surely we must say,

"Lord, Thy love at last has conquered,  
Grant me now my heart's desire,  
None of self and all of Thee."

The life, the teaching, the example of Jesus ennoble all who study them, but power to live as He lived comes only through His death. It cannot be explained; the simple truth is "Whosoever believeth" finds pardon, peace and victory over sin, through the cross of Jesus Christ.

There is so deep a mystery in the truth presented here that I pray earnestly the Holy Spirit may guide us into it. It is one of those wonders which angels desire to look into. We cannot understand, nor do we need to; but we do need an understanding heart in regard to it, for it is the essential truth of the Gospel, foreshadowed in the wilderness when God showed to Moses the pattern of spiritual things and now fulfilled in Christ. We are not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ. By His own blood He entered into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.



“’Tis darkness to my intellect,  
But sunshine to my heart.”

Why must one die that all may live? I cannot answer. Did one die that I might live? All my heart cries out, “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, unto Him be glory and dominion forever and ever.” “The ruin of religion lies in the slight thoughts of men about the blood of Christ. The contemplation of it uninterruptedly will be a part of our blessedness throughout eternity. But even here we can neither understand how great is our salvation nor be thankful for it without a due consideration of the way the Lord entered the holy place. And he will be the most fruitful Christian whose faith is most conversant and most exercised with it.” Eternal redemption; eternal inheritance; good things to come—how joyful and full of triumph is every word to the ear of faith! “The Lord hath redeemed Jacob and ransomed him from the hand of him that was stronger than he.” “Therefore they shall come and sing in the heights of Zion.”

Are you singing in the heights of Zion, with a free and happy heart? Or are you only half-hearted in your joy because half-hearted in your faith? Read over and over again, until its sweetness and strength enter into the very life of your being. By His own blood He

entered into the holiest of all, that we through Him might enter into the very presence of the Holy God before whom the pure angels veil their faces. His precious blood purges the conscience from dead works, and leaves it free to serve in blessed ministries of hope and help for others. I need no longer hesitate because of my unworthiness either to enjoy or to use any good gift of God. Because the precious blood was shed for me, God has even forgotten that I ever sinned! "Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more."

But do not let us forget that it is a purged conscience, not a seared conscience, that makes us thus free. God does not forget, nor have we any right to forget, the sinful past or present, except as it is cleansed and covered by the atoning blood. But trusting in Jesus, with a humble, penitent spirit, we may draw near with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and go on confidently, hopefully, helpfully in all life's duties and enjoyments, for faithful is He that hath promised. The source of our strength and peace is not *our* faithfulness, but *His*. He is the same loving Saviour in heaven caring for His own as when upon the earth, ever living to make intercession for us. Not because God is unwilling to bless us; for Jesus once said, "I say not that I will

pray the Father for you, for the Father Himself loveth you." But because sin, which separates from God, can only be taken away "through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all," He appears in the presence of God for us, as John saw Him in the Apocalypse, "a Lamb as it had been slain," to whom they sang a new song, saying, "Thou wast slain and hast redeemed us to God by Thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation." We will sing the new song there only because we have sung here with simple-hearted faith :

"Before the throne my surety stands,  
My name is written on His hands."

Not with hatred's undertow  
Doth the Love Eternal flow.  
Every chain that spirits wear  
Crumbles in the breath of prayer.  
Still Thy love, O Christ arisen,  
Yearns to seek the souls in prison.  
Through all depths of pain and loss  
Drops the plummet of Thy Cross.  
Never yet abyss was found  
Deeper than the Cross could sound.

—*J. G. Whittier.*

## THE RISEN LORD

*Luke xxiv.*

FOREVERMORE! Oh, the triumph, the assurance, the joy of that word! Was dead—but that is all past. Christ being risen from the dead dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over Him. “Because I live ye shall live also.” Then we who are Christ’s are not under the power of death; we too are alive forevermore. For in Him is life; he that believeth on the Son is passed from death unto life.

“ Sing, heart, I have met Him,  
All radiant, victorious,  
I have met Him and seen Him,  
The Conqueror glorious.

“ I have seen Him and touched Him,  
He hath broken the prison,  
It is life, it is light,  
The Christ hath arisen ! ”

Many times after He rose from the grave Jesus appeared to His disciples, and they found Him the same loving friend who walked and talked with them in the cities and along the country ways of Judea and Galilee. They became quite sure they had not lost Him when He died. But one day when His hands were stretched out to them in blessing, He began

to ascend from where He stood beside them, higher, higher, nearer the blue heaven, farther from the dull earth, until beyond their straining vision a cloud received Him from their sight. Was Jesus gone? Oh, what desolation! But no, He had said, "I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you," and He kept His word. An angel came quickly to assure them He was not lost; that He would come again, the same Jesus they had known and loved so well. And in their own hearts He made Himself so real to them even before the day of Pentecost that they talked with Him in prayer in the upper room at Jerusalem, asking Him to guide them in the choice of one to take the place of Judas.

Our Lord has not lost His interest or His care for His people. John saw Him as one "like the Son of man," our human friend and brother, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Does the picture John gives seem to you unlike Him who was once upon earth? It is a sublime conception of the glorified human Jesus, only so glorious that John cannot find words to describe Him. He is not suffering, despised, rejected, as when He took the form of a servant for our sake; He has taken again the glory which He had with the Father before the world began—the glory which we shall see when we go to be with Him where He is, and which we will share

with Him forever. So beautiful, so glorious, so awful in majesty was He that the man who once leaned upon His bosom fell at His feet as one dead. Is He, then, so changed? Is John no longer His beloved disciple? See Him lay His strong right hand upon him; hear Him say, "Fear not." It is the same voice John had often heard say in tones of courage to trembling men and women, "Be not afraid, only believe"; "Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." Yes, He is the living Saviour, in the midst of the golden candlesticks, that is, His true Church of every name; holding the seven stars, the ministers of His Church, in His right hand. He is alive forevermore and has the keys of death and hades.

Shall we be afraid to pass through that mysterious door when Jesus holds the key? It opens only at His will. He opened it when the one you loved went through. On the other side is life and beauty and blessedness, for Jesus is there, alive forevermore. Let me quote Skipper Tommy, the fisherman of Labrador, "'Tis but like wakin' from a troubled dream. 'Tis like wakin' to the sunlight of a new, clear day. He takes our hand. 'The day is broke,' says He; 'dream no more, but rise, child o' Mine, and come into the sunshine with Me.' Hush; don't you go to gettin' scared. 'Tis a lovely thing that's comin' to you."



## RABBONI

*John xx.*

THE sight of the risen Jesus always makes us glad. If He rose not from the dead, then is our faith vain. But if we see Him, know Him, and hear His voice, we know that all the promises of God "in Him are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." Human hearts would be inconsolable without a risen Christ. And yet, even we who have hope of eternal life through His death do not realize as we should the joy of His resurrection. "Because I live ye shall live also." His life in us is victory over all that leads to death. It is victory over sin, triumph over pain, conquest over difficulties. It is abundant life.

"Not for the trump of doom and judgment hour  
Waits through the slow years the resurrection power.  
To-day He lives; to-day His life may be  
Eternal life begun, O soul, in thee."

"Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping." This woman is the composite picture of humanity. Until we see the risen Jesus we all stand beside the place of buried hopes, lost opportunities, unfulfilled ambitions, disconcerted



plans, bitter memories, buried friendships, graves that have hidden from us the light of our eyes—we stand, weeping. To the question of the angel, “Woman, why weepest thou?” Mary gave the true answer for sorrowing humanity. “They have taken away my Lord and I do not know where to find Him.” No angel voice could comfort her; only Jesus can say with authority and with reason, “Weep not.” It is vain to say in the midst of life’s bitter pain no tears must be shed, unless God’s hand wipes them away, and the risen Christ, with all that His resurrection means for us, says, “Weep not.” Sin would drive us to despair if He had not died and risen again for our justification. Death would rob us of hope, utterly, did not He say, “I am He that liveth and was dead, and behold I am alive forevermore, and have the keys of death and of hades.” That door opens only at His will. He who gives life holds the keys of death. Our loved ones do not go through that way by chance, nor do we. The terror is gone, and the pain of parting is soothed when we know whose hand—the pierced hand of Jesus—holds the keys. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to His abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible and

undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you."

Mary would never have known the joy which made her run to tell the glad news if she had not heard Jesus speak to her by name, and if she had not herself recognized Him. If Peter and John had told her they believed the Lord had risen, she might have formed a faint hope for her own heart in their belief. But oh, the thrill of His voice in her own consciousness! That was joy indeed. To hear Him say "Mary!" speaking directly to herself, as He spoke when He cast out of her seven devils. She had been under their mastery once, but He had delivered her; and now all her being is concentrated in one word of worship, loyalty, and love—"Rabboni!" ("My Master!")

Shall this be your Easter joy? To see the Lord with spiritual sight, to hear Him speak to you, personally, in your own soul's consciousness? Will you turn to Him and with all your heart reply, "My Master"? You know the story of the broken harp hanging rusty and unused upon the castle walls until the master had repaired it and swept its chords with sweetest music. So may the Master restore and put in tune broken hearts and shattered lives this resurrection day.

## A SONG OF LIFE

Bloom, Easter lilies fair !  
Out of the dust arisen,  
From the deep darkness under the sod  
Quickened to life by the touch of God,  
Oh ! tell it abroad with your fragrant breath,  
Life is forever victor of death.

Ring, happy Easter bells !  
Ring from each temple tower ;  
Tell it again where the story is old,  
Tell it afar where it never was told,  
Oh ! tell it abroad with jubilant breath,  
Life is forever victor of death.

Sing, grateful soul of mine !  
Sing till they hear in heaven ;  
Song sweeter than that of blossom or bell,  
For joy beyond all that angels can tell,  
How the Life Divine with quickening breath  
Hath made thee forever victor of death.

—MRS. J. H. K.

## THE ASCENDED LORD

*Luke xxiv. 50-53; Acts i. 9-14.*

“HE was carried up into heaven.” Then heaven is real; it is not a vague dream; it is the place where Jesus is. He who had lived among men, sharing their joys and sorrows, and had proved Himself the Son of God by victory over death, went back to the heaven whence He came, to prepare a place for us that where He is there we may be also. He was standing on the mountainside near Bethany talking with His disciples. They heard His voice; they saw His familiar form, the pierced side and hands stretched out in blessing—His last word a word of love. By the law of the risen life He ascended towards the overbrooding sky until, as they steadfastly gazed, a cloud received Him from their sight. To our understanding of natural law, it was a miracle. According to higher law, which the Author of law understands, it was a natural event. Something similar to it occurred when Elijah went up in a chariot sent from heaven, and when Moses and Elijah came to talk with Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. I love to think of Jesus near the place where He loved to visit

Mary and Martha and Lazarus, going so naturally, so really, so visibly into heaven. Death was past; there was no dark valley with unanswering mystery to hide Him from those who were watching. He only went higher, farther than they could see, into the beautiful brightness that lies between the earthly and the heavenly Jerusalem. I love to look up into the blue beyond the clouds and think what a little way it is to paradise.

He told His disciples He was not going far away, and though they could not see Him He would be always with them in their joys, their sorrows and their work. His last words were the great commission to carry His gospel of hope and healing to every creature on the wide earth, and the promise that He would be with them in that work to the end of the age. Have you noticed that this last promise of our Lord is given only to those who obey His last command? This is something to think of. We have no right to appropriate to ourselves the precious words, "Lo, I am with you alway"—all the days—if we are not observing this command. Every soul on earth is redeemed by the Lord Jesus; He commissions us to tell the good news to every soul. He has not promised to be with us "all the days" if we narrow this commission to any one part of His redeemed world. The disciples went everywhere preach-

ing, the Lord working with them and confirming the Word with signs following. We never work alone when we work with an obedient heart. Work is never fruitless when the Lord works with us. It is most wearying when we try to do it without Him. Let me repeat to you three thoughts that help me as I remember that my ascended Saviour is watching to see how I will do my part in the work He left us to finish when He went away. First, there is God; He is the Author and Finisher of His own plans; I am only His instrument: "The Lord of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass; and as I have purposed, so shall it stand" (Isa. xiv. 24).

Second, there is myself, my individual responsibility: "To every man his work" (Mark xiii. 34). Third, my possibilities: "Perfect in every good work to do His will" (Heb. xiii. 21). A cloud received Him from their sight, but they found Him present with them just as He said He would be, so that when they came to choose an apostle in the place of Judas they asked His guidance just as they used to in the old days when He walked through the villages or sat with them by the seaside. And so sure are we now that Jesus is with us, nearer than the dearest earthly friend, that we talk with Him about all that concerns us, even the little affairs



of every-day life. In all things He identifies us with Himself and our interests with His own. He was received up into glory. He said: "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory." We must comfort one another with these precious thoughts. Let the ascension of Jesus be as real to us as it was to those who saw it. Take the whole comfort of knowing that the same Jesus who lived among men, loving, pitying, helping, is now at the right hand of God for us. All power is His. He knows all about us, and can do anything for us beyond all we ask or think. He said: "I ascend unto My Father and your Father, My God and your God." We, too, shall ascend, conquerors over sin and death forever, and shall sit down with Him upon His throne.

But let us put it in the present tense, for when He ascended He "led a multitude of captives" to freedom and victory. We have been led out and up and over; we are *now* more than conquerors through Him that loved us. He is coming again in like manner as He went into heaven. "And now, little children, abide in Him; that, when He shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before Him at His coming."

"While He blessed them He was parted from



them and carried up into heaven." The very last they saw of Jesus His arms were outstretched towards them in blessing. What a sweet good-bye ! And you remember the angels who stood by said, " This same Jesus will come again." He went away blessing you ; He lives in heaven to bless you ; He will come back some day to the world just as you have seen Him go—with blessing.

It was only a cloud that received Him from their sight. If they could have seen beyond the cloud they would have seen that Jesus was just as real in heaven as when He was standing beside them in Galilee. I love to think of that bright spring morning when the heavens received the ascending Saviour from mortal sight. Sometimes I gaze into the clear blue of the sky and think I can almost see inside of that beautiful home where He said He was going to prepare a place for me. It is all very real. Jesus stood beside His disciples that morning. He was talking with them ; He was saying sweet words of blessing they could never forget ; and suddenly they saw Him rise—up, up, higher, higher, the yearning, loving arms outstretched, as if saying, " Come, follow Me ; you shall be with Me where I am, that you may behold My glory."

It would seem that men and women who saw Him go that way could never again doubt the

reality of the heaven where He went, nor ever again be so taken up with earth as to lose sight of it or be out of harmony with its spirit. We were not there to see that wonderful ascension ; but "blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed." Believing it, we may and do have just as vivid a realization of it, and get the same inspiration from it, as those men had who stood there gazing into heaven.

In an art gallery there are two statues of the Saviour. One is in purest marble, the face of the Saviour so kind, so gentle, yet so strong and majestic that you could not wonder at the look of loving admiration and trust which a beautiful white marble boy at His feet turns upward to the face, while the crucified hand rests upon the curly head. The other is Thorwaldsen's Christ in bronze. The face is grand in its beauty, and both hands are outstretched in blessing. No carved figure is there as in the other, but all day long throngs of sightseeing, busy people come and go, passing directly underneath those blessed hands. Few stop to look at it, for other things claim their attention. But the blessing is there all the same, and, just so it is with our ascended Saviour. His arms are always reaching out in blessing towards all who pass by so busily thinking of other things.

## MY HEAVENLY HOME

*Revelation xxi. 2-7, 22-27.*

THERE are many questions about our heavenly home left unanswered, but enough is told us to make us rest in sweet content until we see for ourselves its glory and blessedness. It could not be described in detail, because no words could convey the wondrous reality. And if we could fully comprehend it life on earth would be so dull in comparison that we would be too eager to go before we were ready for its felicities and opportunities. We would be like children anxious to leave school and "get out into life" before being prepared for it.

"Dreams cannot picture a world so fair," but the things that are told us warrant our brightest imaginings, our highest and holiest hopes. There, God wipes away all tears from all faces, and there is no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain. Is not this the fulfillment of every wish, the reality of every dream? There is a company that no man can number, and not a sad face among them. God, who knows all about their life on earth, their mistakes, their sorrows, their anxiety for those they love,

wipes all tears from all faces. It was not possible to do this for them on earth, but it can be done in heaven, because God makes them see that all His ways are just and right and there is no reason for the shedding of a tear. How can it be? Are there no sad memories? Is no one missed whom we hoped to find there? "There is no sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain." God has said it; how He will bring it to pass I leave with Him. In His presence is fullness of joy; whatever is necessary to give His redeemed people fullness of joy will be done. "He will swallow up death in victory," and "sorrow and sighing shall flee away." This is enough; I am sure God will make His promises good.

Do you ask, What of the heaven where we believe the saved of the Lord are now, before this grand consummation of which St. John writes? I answer in the words of Jesus: "To-day thou shalt be with Me in paradise;" "Where I am, there ye may be also;" "I will receive you unto Myself;" and John also gives us in this wonderful book of Revelation many glimpses of the redeemed in heaven and what they are doing there before the final creation of the new heaven and new earth.

Shall we know each other there? The disciples knew Jesus after His death and resurrection. Moses and Elijah had not lost their

identity when they came from heaven to talk with Jesus on the mount, though they had been there hundreds of years. There are many mansions in the Father's house—how wide apart, as we count space, I do not know ; but if we can flash messages around this world now in a few seconds, I am sure there will be ways to communicate with each other there, so that there will never be any sense of separation. I will be I, and you will be you, only so transformed and beautiful that we will be mutually surprised and charmed when we meet. For you know Jesus will "present us faultless," and that seems a wonderful change when I think of what I am now. Heaven will be for us "ourselves with larger opportunity, better facilities, clarified intellect, a more far-reaching and far-searching sight, and God's standpoint from which to see."

## "I SHALL BE SATISFIED"

Not here ! not here ! not where the sparkling waters  
Fade into mocking sands as we draw near,  
When in the wilderness each footstep falters.  
I shall be satisfied, but oh ! not here.

There is a land where every pulse is thrilling  
With rapture earth's sojourner may not know ;  
Where Heaven's repose the weary heart is stilling,  
And peacefully life's time-tossed currents flow.

Far out of sight, while yet the flesh enfolds us,  
Lies the fair country where our hearts abide,  
And of its bliss is naught more wondrous told us  
Than these few words, "I shall be satisfied."

Satisfied ! Satisfied ! The spirit's yearning,  
For sweet companionship with kindred minds,  
The silent love that here meets no returning—  
The inspiration which no language finds—

Shall they be satisfied ? The soul's vague longing,  
The aching void which nothing earthly fills ;  
Oh ! what desires upon my soul are thronging,  
As I look upward to the heavenly hills.

Thither my steps with eager hope are tending ;  
Saviour and Lord, with Thy frail child abide,  
Guide me towards *home*, where all my wanderings  
ending

*I shall see Thee and "Shall be satisfied."*

—Selected.

